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# A NEW RACE

A ROMANCE

FROM THE GERMAN

OF

GOLO RAIMUND *pseud.*

*Bertha (Heyn) Frederick.*

BY MRS A. L. WISTER

TRANSLATOR OF "THE FOUND WIFE," "THE OLD MAM'SELLE'S SECRET,"  
"ONLY A GIRL," "IN THE SCHILLINGSCOURT," ETC.

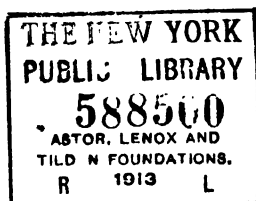


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## A NEW RACE.

## CHAPTER I.

THE fading light of a lovely day in May coloured with a faint glow the whitewashed walls of a small garret chamber, and brought with it a gentle breeze to cool the cheek of a young girl, the only occupant of the room, who was absorbed in the painting of a fan, over which she bent as if anxious to lose no last ray of the dying day.

The room was but poorly furnished, every article in it was plain and old-fashioned, and yet there was evident an effort to give it an attractive air. On the snowy bureau-cover stood a glass of water holding a bunch of fresh spring flowers, and various modestly-framed little sketches in water-colours adorned the walls.

The only window was wide open, admitting not only all the light of the declining day, but also the fragrance of the blossoming lindens, and affording a view beyond the garden below of the streets of the pleasant suburb, especially gay on this charming Saturday afternoon. The sound of many voices floated upward on the air, the cheerful talk of

pedestrians, the merry laughter of children, and the noise of carriages and riders, to all of which the young girl paid apparently no heed. Not until the daylight grew very dim, and she had seemingly finished her task, did she wash out her brushes in the glass on the table at which she sat, push back her wooden chair, and rise to look from the window.

Her figure was slender and supple, and her face instinct with beauty in spite of the expression of fatigue on the youthful features. Her plentiful golden-brown hair was simply smoothed away from her temples and gathered in a knot at the back of her head, her plain dark dress was buttoned to the throat, everything about her was unpretending in the extreme, and yet there was in her air and carriage a certain distinction not to be concealed by sordid surroundings.

She leaned out of the window, inhaling with evident pleasure the fragrance of the syringas and Guelder roses blooming in the pretty little garden below, while her gaze rested upon the pedestrians who were going home, either singly or in groups, from their afternoon walk.

"Going home!" The words were so vividly present to her mind that involuntarily her lips uttered them, and, startled by the sound of her own voice, she looked around her as if in fear lest some one had overheard her.

Did memory suggest to her the true meaning of

these words? did hope encourage her to utter them? or were they only the natural expression of a human heart longing to share in the happiness of the happy?

Her large serious eyes turned thoughtfully away from the window to encounter suddenly the gaze of a spare elderly dame who appeared on the threshold of the low door.

“Good heavens, Eva, here you are leaning out of the window, doing nothing, absolutely nothing!” she exclaimed. “When I sacrificed my own comfort that you might have the whole afternoon to yourself,—a Saturday afternoon too, when I need you more than ever, since it is the servants’ holiday,—I did think you would show some regard in the end for me and all I have to do. It is one of your worst faults always to take an ell where an inch is given you. I told you that you might have the afternoon, but I did not mean the evening besides, when I did expect to have a little peace. Pastor Rücker has been here with his deaf mother, and I have had to bear all the burden of conversation, and shriek myself hoarse for the last half-hour, because you chose to stay up here. And the Herr Pastor was very doubtful as to the propriety of allowing you to go on with this fan-painting, which, after all, can but subserve some frivolous end, and brings you into most undesirable relations with tradespeople.”

"But you do not share his scruples, Fräulein Wilding?" the girl asked, entreatingly. "My work is such a pleasure to me, and I do not know, besides, how I should make both ends meet if a stop were put to my painting."

"I hope you do not mean to say that I do not do enough for you, Eva," the elder lady said, in a provoked tone. "You cannot consider it unjust that, after giving you three years of free instruction in my establishment, I require you to teach in it a few years without salary?"

The girl looked up at her and shook her head. "No, I do not so consider it; you know that I am grateful, and that it is my earnest desire to discharge the debt I owe you. But what would you think of me if I did not do my utmost to provide for the cost of my dress?—which must amount to something. Surely even the Herr Pastor could not approve of such negligence."

The elder lady glanced at the girl's plain attire, and, somewhat appeased, said, "Well, well, I have always been willing to help you, and will even make further sacrifices when they are within the bounds of possibility. It was no small burden that my uncle left me in conjunction with my small legacy—the charge of your education; and I am glad that you are grateful, and willing to acknowledge that your time belongs to me. I should like to see the new plan for the arrangement of

school hours, which I hope you have ready drawn up, now that the vacation is so nearly at an end."

Eva took from a drawer several closely-written sheets of paper, while Fräulein Wilding picked up the fan from the table and went to the window to examine it.

The delicately painted little figures upon it illustrated Cinderella's flight from the ball-room, while the prince following her stooped to pick up the small slipper dropped as she ran.

"Childish nonsense!" the schoolmistress said, sourly; "you ought to have outgrown your love for such silly stories; flowers and arabesques would have been much more suitable. It positively seems almost impossible to drive from your head these childish ideas of fairies. I detest such dreamy tendencies, Eva. I believe you really require that I should now and then remind you that fairies do not exist, and that Cinderellas no longer turn into princesses."

A weary smile hovered for an instant upon the girl's lips. "No, there are no fairies," she said; "they are gone; only the Cinderellas are real. But indeed I thought the decoration not unsuitable for a ball-room; the story ends so well."

"That is just the point," the schoolmistress said, triumphantly, "just the point—the prince. I wish you would put away from you all your fanciful dreams, Eva. For you not only do fairies not exist,



there is no prince either. There is nothing in the fable that can apply to you."

The girl's bright brown eyes suddenly shone with tears that did not fall. "Oh, yes," she said, earnestly; "there is in the story something that made it most dear to me as a child, and that must always have a charm for me. It is the dead mother's blessing and protection that the fairies brought the child, and that still hovers around the orphan. Belief in the protecting presence of the loved and lost is a consolation I could not forego, and it is most simply and attractively illustrated in the story of Cinderella."

The schoolmistress shrugged her shoulders, and, replacing the fan on the table, left the room, followed by Eva with her papers in her hand.

The girls' school to which the large house was devoted was held in high repute, and if on this particular day it was so quiet that a footstep echoed through its empty rooms and passages, it was only because the Easter vacation was not yet over, and pupils and assistant teachers were alike enjoying the delights of freedom from work.

The head of the establishment stayed in the house, which was her treasure, and where of course was her heart. She, however, was not compelled to do so. Eva alone was obliged to submit to the yoke of labour without relaxation, to monotony without change; she had no home, no parents, no friends;

she was poor and dependent; the school-room was her asylum, and Fräulein Wilding, however harsh, her protectress.

In the drawing-room the girl had just deftly arranged the cups upon the tea-table and lighted the lamp, when the bell of the gate of the little front garden rang. The twilight that still reigned outside enabled Fräulein Wilding, standing at the window, to perceive an old gentleman in light summer costume, who impatiently raised his hand and pulled the bell loudly for the second time.

The only servant left in the house opened the wrought-iron gate and admitted the stranger, who, after a short search, produced a card.

"For Fräulein von Zähringen," the servant said, when the schoolmistress would have taken it from him.

"Impossible; she knows no one. Give it to me," the lady rejoined, impatiently, and then read in a tone of hesitation and surprise, "'Herr Roland!'"—Eva, have you any relatives of that name?"

There was an evident tremor in the girl's voice as she replied, "I do not know; but I should in any case like to speak to the gentleman."

"In any case?" the lady repeated, sharply. "I must settle this matter, Eva. I shall remain here. Show the gentleman in, Joseph."

The next moment the stranger appeared upon the threshold, a strong, muscular figure, not yet

bowed by age. He paused for a second in the doorway, his keen glance from beneath bushy gray eyebrows seeking out Eva and resting upon her in critical inspection. His face was sunburned, and life's experience rather than age had deeply furrowed his brow, but his carriage was erect and firm in spite of the snow sprinkled among his still abundant hair. His countenance was stern, his features strongly marked; there was nothing sympathetic in the shrewd deep-set eyes and the lines of indomitable energy about the firmly-closed lips.

And yet the girl's large bright eyes rested as if spell-bound upon him, and the red lips parted lightly in speechless expectation.

"You are Eva von Zähringen? Yes, you are she," he said, answering his own question, as he passed by Fräulein Wilding without even according her the courtesy of a salute. "Have you seen my card?"

"Yes," the girl replied, in a scarcely audible voice. "Herr Roland."

"Have you no suspicion of who that is?" he asked further.

Her hand sought her heart, which began to beat fast and loud. "Hardly," she replied, breathlessly, "for I dare not cherish the hope that it is my long-vanished grandfather."

"Hope?" he replied, with a slightly scornful shrug, evidently subduing some fleeting emotion.

"Let us rather say supposition. And you may cherish it, Eva. I am in deed and truth your grandfather."

A cry, hushed for years in the poor girlish heart, suddenly burst forth,—a cry of joy. "Grandfather!" she almost screamed. "Oh, grandfather!" and hurried towards him.

But he extended his hand and held her off at arm's length.

"Will you not have the kindness, madame, to leave us alone for a few moments?" he said, coolly, turning to Fräulein Wilding.

The lady, taken by surprise by the blunt request, inclined her head in assent, and left the room, whereupon the old man turned again to his grandchild.

"Grandfather!" she said once more, as if exulting in the sound of the word; but he still held her from him.

"Not yet, Eva, not yet. Have you never heard that I am a bankrupt,—a man whose friends fell away from him in a single night like leaves in an autumn wind? Have you not been told that I forsook my wife and child and left them to perish in poverty?"

"Something of all this I have heard, grandfather, but not told so harshly," she replied. "What I really know is, that you were to my dear mother a father whom she loved fondly and never forgot, and that she left your memory to me as a precious legacy."

"Eva!" he exclaimed, his face transfigured by a tender smile, as he opened his arms and clasped the poor child to his heart.

He was, however, evidently impatient of such bursts of emotion. He subdued his agitation, and in a few minutes the dark harsh countenance was as unmoved as before.

"You rejoice prematurely, like a child, without any real knowledge of me," he said, sternly, turning up her lovely face and looking keenly into the eyes that so vividly reminded him of a time long vanished. "Why so, Eva? What do you expect of me?"

She looked timidly at him for a moment, and then replied, with a fervent trustfulness that warmed his heart in spite of himself, "You will love me, grandfather, and we belong to each other."

"A dubious happiness, my child. I am old, poor, and embittered in mind. I can be but little to you."

"I am poor too, grandfather," she replied, smiling; "but I am young and hopeful. Perhaps I can be something to you, if you will let me brighten your life. I shall be so happy if I may! We shall not want. I can work, and shall work gladly if it is for you."

Gradually the expression of suspicion and distrust disappeared from his face as he drew her towards him again and clasped her close.

"I am not poor in that sense, Eva," he said, with a slight smile; "you will have no need to work. I have worked for nineteen years for your sake, and the fruit of my labours is yours. I am poor in that I possess no happy memories. What I called happiness was an illusion. I am embittered because I have learned to know the world as it is; because life has left me no dreams to gladden existence. I have no longer any faith in love and constancy. I give no compassion and ask for none. I do not value the esteem of my fellow-men. I despise it!"

She looked up at him shyly, but continued to stroke gently the hand she held in hers. Her light touch seemed to soothe him. He led her to the little lounge, and sat down beside her, continuing more calmly, "I have long been searching you out. Of all those whom I formerly loved, and who, as I thought, belonged to me, I found only graves, whence issued no words of love or reconciliation."

"Ah, grandfather!" she said, in gentle reproof.

A bitter smile hovered upon the old man's stern features. "No, I am not quite so hard as you think. I plucked a white rose from your mother's grave, Eva; my first flower in eighteen years."

"That was because you felt it was a loving greeting from herself!" the girl exclaimed. "Because you felt she was near you. She died when I was so little; but I remember her well, and she herself keeps green my memory of her, for she left me

her diary, to be given to me on my nineteenth birthday. Oh, how she loved you, grandfather! How firm was her faith in you! How constant her affection! She always thought you would come home, and she writes, 'Give him your love in place of mine; be to him a tender, obedient daughter. My last prayer is for you both!'"

He sprang up and paced the room to and fro.

"Is this true, Eva?" he asked. "Did she really think of me with affection, and with faith in my honour? If she has left you an image of me untouched by blame or mistrust I have done well to return."

The girl tenderly kissed his hand. "And for my sake too, grandfather," she said, timidly; "I will be such a grateful, happy daughter to you. It is so sweet to belong to somebody in this world."

He made no reply, but returned the pressure of her hand, and then went to the window, where he stood for a moment gazing out into the dim garden.

"But you must know to whom you belong, Eva," he said suddenly, turning towards her. "I take nothing and will give nothing upon trust. I will tell you briefly what my life has been. Not what I have thought, felt, and suffered: that is not for your ears—it is mine, and mine alone. The story will not be long, and I will be my own voucher. You must not hear it from stranger lips, fragmentarily or imperfectly.

"I was a wealthy man. My father had left me his huge business interest and an unsullied name. I married a lovely young girl, the daughter of a learned professor, and for years I believed myself fondly loved. There was my first folly. For even then I was plain and awkward as I am now, although time and misfortune have done their part in making me harsh and stern. I myself cared little for luxury, but I lived luxuriously for my wife's sake. She revelled in her unaccustomed wealth, and soon seemed as though born to it. The more brilliant the gayety that reigned in my household the more did I withdraw from it. My wife loved splendour; my tastes were simple. She could not live except in a crowd, while a quiet evening at home seemed to me the only true reward of a laborious day in my counting-room. Still I let her do as she liked, accorded her to the full her heart's desire, and took all the care upon myself. Herein lay my second folly.

"For my cares increased and threatened to overwhelm me. Fortune no longer befriended me as it had my father and grandfather. One speculation after another proved a failure; I lost two valuable vessels in one year, and the insolvency of several large firms caused me immense loss. I worked and watched and slaved, but while I was trying to keep my head above water I completely lost sight of my household expenditures. I had advised my



wife to curtail her expenses, without indeed saying anything to startle her, but she scattered my counsel to the winds; our paths were separating more widely every day.

“There existed one link between us, however, in our love for our only child,—your mother. When she was presented in society there was no lack of suitors for her hand, since, although there was a whisper afloat that I had sustained some large losses, I still passed for a millionaire.

“Your mother was but seventeen when she surrendered her heart, without any thought as to the value of what she received in exchange for so precious a gift. Her girlish eyes and ears were fascinated by her superb wooer, and my wife’s foolish vanity, dazzled by a high-sounding name, lent a ready aid to her child’s inclinations. Your father was as handsome a man as ever wore a dragoon’s uniform, and his family was one of the oldest in the country. Otherwise I knew little of them. His father, a retired colonel, lived on his heavily-mortgaged estate of the Zührenburg, and an elder brother held an office under government.

“If I opposed the match it was chiefly from pecuniary considerations; Zähringen was poor, and I wanted a son-in-law who could prop up my failing credit. For a time I withstood my wife’s entreaties and the tears of my child, but there ensued passionate scenes, giving rise to serious family discord,

and with a longing for peace and rest greater than any one suspected, at last I yielded."

"Poor grandfather!" the girl said, with emotion; "bearing your lonely burden without one word of love and sympathy. I know what that is!"

A pitying smile hovered upon the stern face. The child was comparing the brief sorrow of a troubled youth with the woe of a lifetime.

"Yes, I yielded; and there my folly ceased and my wrong-doing began, as was proved too soon. I had not sufficiently informed myself as to the character of my son-in-law. I was satisfied with the testimony of his superior officers as to his capabilities and prospects. His numerous debts I did not regard, for, although my wealth was no longer what it had been, I was still a rich man. The crisis in my affairs was, however, by no means past, and I was very anxious to secure my child's future. God knows what it cost me to withdraw a considerable amount of capital from my business to invest for her, and, yielding to the wishes of my wife and son-in-law, I sunk it in Hedwig's name in the Zährenburg, purchasing all the mortgages on the estate. I wished thus to give her future husband a chance to own his ancestral estate in case it should hereafter prove to his advantage to do so. The old Baron still lived in the castle, and at his desire the marriage was celebrated there.

"Never was there a happier or more trustful

bride than your mother, and never did father more earnestly pray for his child's welfare than did I."

Memory seemed wellnigh to overwhelm him. He sprang up and paced the room to and fro before he continued. "Well, I must finish. Your father was a worthless scoundrel, Eva, faithless to his wife in the first year of their marriage! Do not start, child; look the truth steadily in the face. No deception is so degrading as self-deception. All his infamy, and the worthlessness of his entire family were revealed later. Fate kindly blinded your mother's eyes for a couple of years. But if this were kindness to her, for me it was a misfortune, for could I have then seen my son-in-law as he really was, the tie might have been broken that afterwards made her so wretched. But your father was, immediately after his marriage, transferred to a distant garrison, and withdrawn from my watchful observation. In summer the young couple went to the Zährenburg, and during the brief visits that my daughter paid to her paternal home, I could gain no knowledge of her domestic life. And, besides, I was soon fully absorbed in my own cares. The tempest was gathering about me from all sides. When it broke above my head I lost sight of my daughter, and this was the other wrong that I committed. Loss followed loss. The ship of my fortune went down among the breakers, carrying with it name, honour, and prosperity,—the

prosperity of many another besides." He leaned back beside Eva, and covered his eyes with his hand.

"Grandfather," the girl said, gently laying her hand upon his arm, "God rules the wind and the storm; you did not perish."

"Hush!" he said, almost angrily. "Not now; it hurts still, after all these years. No, I did not perish, but I came forth from the struggle another man. How this was there is no need to dwell upon now: you could hardly understand it. But I was utterly broken down and worn out. I consulted my lawyers, and meant to declare my insolvency on the next day. But I was to drain the bitter cup to the dregs. Restless and miserable, I sat in my private office until late in the night. I could not tell what kept me there; perhaps the feeling that makes a general refuse to yield his fort, although he knows its downfall is inevitable; perhaps the sensation that one has when watching the mortal remains of a dear friend borne away forever.

"It was very late when I retired,—but not to rest. Towards morning I was roused by an alarm of fire, —my office was in flames. Terrible as was my dismay, for I clearly foresaw all the consequences of this fresh disaster, it paralyzed me but for a moment. I was one of the first upon the spot. Desks and tables were all on fire,—there was food enough in the old rooms for the flames. At the

risk of my life I contrived to save, unharmed, the most important of my books and papers; the loss sustained was not irreparable. The fire was soon subdued, and the house was comparatively uninjured. But there was nothing that could put a stop to the suspicion, breathed softly at first, then uttered loudly, that the fire was not the result of accident, and years have brought no diminution of the burning pain this suspicion caused me.

"The next day, as soon as I could collect my thoughts, I declared my insolvency, and twenty-four hours afterwards I was arrested as an incendiary."

Silence reigned in the room, unbroken save for the ticking of the tall clock and the man's laboured breathing. "As an incendiary," he repeated, hoarsely, after a pause, "I, Jonathan Roland! I wished to take leave of my wife. She had locked herself into her room, and I went without bidding her farewell. In the solitude of my prison I recovered my power of just reflection. Appearances were against me,—a bankruptcy and a fire occurring simultaneously required investigation. The authorities were but doing their duty.

"And my family and friends would also do theirs. Public opinion might pity me, but could not condemn me. I wrote to my wife and begged her to come to me. She sent me a letter in her stead. I know it by heart to-day after all these

years! 'You have recklessly consigned me to misery,' she wrote, 'and I am left defenceless to endure it as best I may, but I will not share your disgrace. If you can clear yourself from the suspicion that now attaches to you I will come to you. Until then look upon me as dead.' This was what was said to me in my utter wretchedness by the wife whom I had loved so ardently, to whom I had consecrated a lifetime of labour and devotion."

"Poor grandfather!" Eva said, softly, as the tears rolled slowly down her cheeks. "But my mother, did she forsake you?"

"Your mother, whose marriage had for three years been childless, was just expecting your birth. She knew nothing of my misfortunes. She was looking forward to her coming joy. She was a delicate woman. I had concealed every apprehension of misfortune from her that she might know nothing of my ruin until her hour of danger should be past. But I wrote to your father. I could be released on bail, which he could easily procure, offering the Zährenburg as security. Your father also replied to me by letter,—a letter filled with complaints and reproaches, accusing me of ruining my daughter's future, of degrading his noble name, and concluding with a positive refusal to procure bail for me."

"Oh, what a bitter, bitter time!" Eva said; "bitter for you then, and for me now."

"It is the truth, Eva, and I cannot spare you the hearing it if you are to share my home. Of all the sufferings I then endured, the worst pang came from the thought that the companion of my life, she to whom I had laid bare my very soul at all times, could doubt me. This pang I have never mastered. Her conduct was faithless, and unwise besides, for the desertion of me by my family, which was shortly made public, could hardly influence general opinion in my favour. After my experience of those nearest to me, I scorned to appeal to my friends; they knew my situation and my character, —if they held me to be innocent, it was for them to come forward and offer their aid. I could not ask it of them. But the evident mistrust of me shown by my family deterred them; not one stood by me, Eva, not one."

She sat listening to him with clasped hands, the distress that memory conjured up in his soul mirrored in her eyes.

"Chance was kinder than my former friends," he continued. "The assizes were close at hand, and my case was soon tried. I was my own advocate. I am not a fluent speaker, and I said but little, but that little was the truth and produced its effect. I was immediately acquitted.

"I was *free*; but freedom does not always mean happiness. When I left the court-room I was uncertain whither I should turn my steps. I had no

home, for not for worlds would I have sought those who had cast the first stone at me. I was driven in a droschky to a hotel.

"Immediately after my acquittal many hands were offered me in aid, but I grasped none; no, all that was over now, and I sent that very evening for my lawyer. It had already been arranged that my creditors should receive seventy per cent. of what was owing them, and now I formally made over to them my town-house, country-house, everything that I had possessed in the world, that I might be released from all obligations to await in person the winding up of my affairs.

"Before the evening was over my wife came to the hotel. I refused to see her. I never saw her again. Some of my so-called friends also presented themselves, but were not admitted. Fate, however, had one good in reserve for me. I was not forced to ask favours of those whom I so despised. Thanks to the foresight and prudence of my grandfather, there was in my family a fund appropriated to the relief of needy men and women bearing the name of Roland who could prove their relationship to the founder of the fund. This had never been drawn upon; it had accumulated by its added interest year after year, and I was the first to apply for the income from it. It assured my wife a comfortable although modest subsistence, and gave me the means for crossing the ocean and beginning a



career in America. My creditors placed no obstacle in the way of my departure, and I went."

"But my mother," the girl asked, sadly; "could you go without bidding her good-bye?"

He shook his head.

"Oh, no; you had been born during my imprisonment. No one had taken the trouble to inform me of this; I had learned it only upon my arrival at the hotel. Yes, Eva, the greatest self-sacrifice that I ever made was to go to the Zährenburg, where dwelt the man whose conduct towards me had been so dastardly,—to seek his home that I might see my child once more before I left the country. Love for her was the only good impulse stirring within me, and I followed where it led.

"My son-in-law received me in the presence of his father and of his elder brother. Listen, child," he said, with a bitter smile; "the end is at hand. They knew that I had nothing more to give; they feared I might come to ask a favour, and forestalled it by turning me, like a dog, from the door. Do not open your eyes in such surprise and horror," he continued, in a stern tone. "*Your* people did this,—your father, your grandfather, your uncle!"

She covered her face with her hands and burst into tears. At the sound of her sobs the tempest of anger within him died away. "But you are also your mother's child, Eva," he said, more calmly, after a pause. "No need to hang your head for

their sins. Your mother lay raving in the delirium of a nervous fever; she would not have known me even had I been allowed to see her. To await her recovery for weeks or months, only perhaps to encounter the same cruel experience with which my wife had furnished me, was too much for me; it was beyond my powers of endurance.

"The first seeds of self-interest were sown in my soul in those days. The plant sprung thence has become a mighty tree, beneath the shade of which there is more calm repose than is dreamed of by the idéalist. Now," he said, standing erect in vigorous age, "my own wishes and wants take first rank with me, and I am content."

While he had been recalling the times of bitter pain and woe, suffering had lent a gentler expression to his face, but now that he had in his reminiscences reached the turning-point in his life, when he had begun a new existence, burning his ships behind him, the hard look returned to his features, and showed the man as he was now, not as he had been.

"I could not wait without any certainty as to the result," he began again. "Your mother was, I thought, provided for, since I had sunk such a sum in the Zählenburg, and her husband, as I then knew him, was neither better nor worse than the rest of mankind, detestable though his conduct had been, so far as I was concerned.

"Without bidding farewell to one human being I turned my back upon my early home and sailed from Hamburg for North America.

"What follows has no further connection with your grandmother and your parents, Eva. People here know nothing about it, and it is scarcely worth while to tell you of the wild, adventurous life I have led. I was forty-eight years old when I began to work again, day and night, scarcely allowing myself time for sleep. Fortune befriended me in everything that I undertook, and even in that land of sudden success mine was astonishing. At first I speculated cautiously, content with small but certain gains. This, however, was only at first. My own needs were always modest; in America I spent less than ever upon them. Year after year I remitted considerable sums to Europe, until my creditors were all paid off, both principal and interest. In my eager pursuit of gain thoughts of my home and my daughter were held in abeyance; but so soon as I felt myself once more a free man, I wrote to my former lawyer for tidings of them. Too late!—just a few days too late!

"Tidings I had, but what tidings! Long before I left Europe my son-in-law had plunged deep in gambling debts and the wild excesses of a life of dissipation. In view of his wealthy father-in-law all had been willing to lend him money. With my ruin this life, in which the old Baron had largely

shared, came to a sudden end. Nothing more was to be expected from me, but something was to be feared, and I now believe that the chief reason why they refused to allow me to see my child was a dread lest I should warn and advise her. They soon made Hedwig acquainted with her husband's desperate case, and convinced her that the only way out of the difficulty was by an absolute transfer to him of all her rights in her own property. Confiding and inexperienced as she was, she was easily influenced to consent to this. The larger part of her fortune went to pay Zähringen's debts, and the remainder was consumed in dissipation by the old Baron and his son, while a life of inconceivable misery was led by your mother.

"Your father's elder brother, the Oberforstmeister von Zähringen, bought a portion of the mortgages on the Zährenburg held by your mother, and from that time played the master in the castle, which afterwards became really his. The arrogance and contempt with which the whole family treated your unfortunate mother was only exceeded by the brutality of her husband, and in all the misery occasioned by my ruin hers only was to be compared with mine, and I was a mature, serious man; she was a spoiled child, with a warm, loving heart thirsting for affection."

"Stop, grandfather!" the girl entreated; "it breaks my heart,—I cannot bear it."

"You must," he said, harshly; "how else *can* you judge between me and the Zähringens? Your father, of whom my wife had been so proud as a son-in-law, now broke with her entirely, and refused to allow Hedwig any intercourse with her. Forsaken, despised, anxious, and careworn, my child awaited the end. And it came! In a mad ride after a night's debauch, your father was thrown from his horse, and was carried home to his wife dead.

"Very little time was allowed her to recover from the shock; the family paid her no consideration after she had resigned to them her fortune. It was speedily found that the little of it that was left sufficed barely to pay your father's debts and to leave a few hundred thalers for his widow and child. The old Baron, to be rid of all charge of her, sold the Zährenburg to his eldest son, and Hedwig was notified that she must seek a home elsewhere.

"My wife received you. The income from the relief fund was all upon which the three had to depend. Your mother, my lawyer wrote me, was already doomed to death. No efforts of my wife—who had at least loved her child devotedly—sufficed to save her life. When my letter of inquiry arrived in Europe your mother had been buried for a week, and they wrote me that in all probability her child would soon follow her.

"I was again overwhelmed. I thought I had forgotten her, but deep in my heart the memory of her was still living, and beside it had glimmered the hope of seeing her again. Now she was dead the last link binding me to the past was broken. I had been working to retrieve my honour, and meanwhile my only child had sickened and died, forsaken and unprotected. I was filled with a futile rage that choked and destroyed all good impulses. Pity, forbearance, kindness, were all annihilated within me!

"I did not think of you,—a little creature whom I had never seen, and of whom they wrote me that it would shortly follow its mother. I only longed to blot out from my memory my entire past.

"I was possessed by a constant restlessness,—my vigorous nature defied defeat. I plunged into business, always with the same fortunate results. I speculated in land; I supplied the Federal troops with weapons; I bought cattle in Mexico, and invested in copper-mines in Peru. And everything turned to gain in my hands.

"At last I was persuaded by an acquaintance to bore for oil. My wells proved to be among the most productive, and where was the need of further labour? Wealth flowed in upon me with no exertion upon my part. Then one day I met a German from my native city who recognized me. From him I learned the death of my wife, and that you

were living, as he thought, in great poverty. He suggested to me to bestow upon you some of my superfluous riches.

"My resolution was soon taken. Whom should my wealth benefit, if not you? You could not, whatever you might be, prove worse than the sycophants among whom I was living, and, at all events, you were Hedwig's child.

"I returned, and saw my old home once more, and the grave of my former self. But my task led me among the living. I began my search for you. It is incredible how quickly all traces of the poor vanish in the whirl of existence. I sought and inquired; I went to the little town where you had lived with your grandmother, and there I found two neglected graves in the churchyard. I was directed elsewhere, but death had forestalled me, and you had fallen into other hands. I learned at last where you really were, and here I am, Eva, to ask you if you will come with me."

"Ah, so gladly!" she cried, drying the tears in her lovely eyes, "so gladly! We are both alone, and surely belong to each other."

"My protection belongs to you," he replied, "but not my society. Reflect, Eva. I am a harsh old man,—after to-day I shall never accord to memory the power to move me. I am not gentle or kindly, I am morose and egotistical. Mistrust and misanthropy are my constant companions. I have been

a wanderer over the earth, and wherever a door stood hospitably open for me, and domestic peace and happiness seemed to reign, I said to myself, 'Mere illusion,' and turned away. I do not understand pleasure. At its approach I turned my back. My wealth is more than sufficient to gratify the wildest dreams of your fancy. What can you want of myself?"

"Love, grandfather, love!" she said, with yearning impatience. "Oh, try it! Take me with you!"

He inclined his head and held out his hand to her.

"It shall be as you will, Eva; but do not complain if you find life at my side anything but bright. I have been perfectly honest with you, and have told you what I was and what I am. If you have the courage to live with me, come."

She threw her arms about his neck, and pressed her warm, rosy lips upon his hard, sunburned cheek. "Yes, I have the courage, grandfather; but you? You know nothing of me, except that I am your daughter's child,—so much, and yet so little! Fräulein Wilding frequently finds fault with me. I am often thoughtless and careless. You will need to have forbearance with me,—with my childish timidity,—but I have always been so lonely."

He smiled compassionately as he looked at her.



"I shall be more easily satisfied than Fräulein Wilding. As I told you, I look for but little from human beings. How came you here, and what position do you occupy in her house?"

"I am one of the teachers. I was educated here, —without pay for the few last years,—and now I am discharging the debt by giving instruction. While I was a pupil myself I could only spend a few hours daily in teaching the lower classes, but since I passed the examinations I have given all my time."

"And your salary is a sufficient one?"

The girl's large brown eyes opened wide in surprise. "Salary, grandfather? I was a boarding-scholar here in this house for two years without paying anything. It is right that I should give my services now without compensation."

He nodded. "To be sure. That is business. How long does the contract provide for?"

"Fräulein Wilding has said nothing about that."

"Then I will do so, Eva. You have decided to live with me, and I will annul the contract. Do not look so distressed; it shall be done in a manner quite satisfactory to the lady. I should dislike nothing more than to have you under obligations to any one. I think I know what to expect from you. I shall make no large claims. You must tell me of your life to-morrow; it is too late to-night, the clock is just about to strike eleven. Will you, if you

can, send Fräulein Wilding to me now, and stay without until you are called? My business now lies with her."

While her future life was being decided in the little drawing-room, Eva wandered up and down in the dim garden as if in a dream. A thousand times in the calm summer nights she had listened to the rustling of the lindens, but now they sang to the orphan a song of happiness and home, strange indeed to her ears.

When Fräulein Wilding called her in, the lady's joyous expression of countenance proclaimed that Herr Roland had settled matters after a very desirable fashion. She embraced Eva with fervour, called her fortune's favourite, and could not sufficiently praise her grandfather's kindness and liberality.

"Until to-morrow, then, Eva," said the old man, cutting short the flow of the Fräulein's eloquence. "It is too late for you to leave here to-night. By to-morrow noon you will have arranged your affairs, and I will come for you." He shook hands with her, and left the house.

She gazed after him until his figure in its light summer suit melted into the gloom. She seemed to herself to be longing to detain a vanishing dream. But her former protectress convinced her of its reality.

"Happy girl!" she exclaimed. "He is evidently a nabob. Ah, how rich you will be!"

"Happy indeed!" the girl thought, with fervent gratitude. "He is my grandfather. I shall be loved."

When, at a late hour, she entered her bedroom, the little world of her joys and sorrows, she went to the window, whence, a few hours before, she had gazed so longingly at the groups of merry pedestrians going home. What a change in so short a space of time! Henceforth she belonged among the happy, not among the forsaken and desolate. The moonlight filled the room with a silver glory, and it all looked strangely transfigured as she gazed about her, possessed with an unfamiliar sensation of happiness. Her eyes fell upon the fan that still lay on the table, the little painted figures showing clearly in the moon's mild radiance. She took it up and looked at it almost lovingly. "No," she softly whispered, "there are no fairies, but there is something far more powerful to protect the desolate,—a mother's blessing."

## CHAPTER II.

It was a bleak, sunless path along which Eranad wandered during the years of her childhood and girlhood, and when, dazzled by the beauty of the unknown world now opening before her, and glowing with affection and the sense of belonging to some one, she looked back, she seemed to have been straying hitherto in a gloomy desert.

Above her very cradle had gathered the tempest that had shattered her mother's happiness and desolated her own life. Nothing was left of the luxury that had surrounded the few first days of her existence. In her memory were none of those blissful reminiscences of childhood that even in old age can, like a magic wand, touch and soften our hearts, however they may have been hardened and embittered in the struggle of life. For her first conscious gaze into her mother's eyes found them dim with tears, and the lips that kissed her trembled with suppressed anguish. The child instinctively felt that she could not shout and be glad like the children whom she saw in the streets, for fear of provoking an outburst of grief that pained her, although she could not understand it. She had no

remembrance of her father, or of the splendour of the Zährenburg, which her mother had left mute and tearless, but broken-hearted. Her earliest recollections were of the life with her grandmother, of growing up with the two lonely women.

The small, modest apartment had been very quiet, and the little girl knew almost nothing of childish glee and childish games. Laughter, meeting with no response, died in her throat, and she would stand mute and motionless beside her mother's knee, looking fixedly at her, while the poor young widow gazed into vacancy, as though lost in dreams. But she loved her idolatrously,—her beautiful, gentle mother, who was always kind and patient, whose tender care was ever present to her child. A loving word, a caress, or even a rare smile hovering upon the pale face that grew paler every day, constituted the child's greatest happiness. Her plays with her dolls, which she quietly carried on at her mother's feet, all bore the trace of the intense affection that bound together mother and daughter.

Her relations with her grandmother were widely different. The foolish, tyrannical woman mourned no desolated youth, no misplaced confidence; what she bewailed was the glitter and show of life, the worthless grandeur that had formerly veiled her weakness. Every deprivation was dwelt upon, and her irritable temper, which did indeed spare her daughter, expended itself all the oftener upon her

grandchild. It is true that gross injustice was sure to be followed by lavish caresses; but the little girl felt shy and unsafe with her grandmother, whose variable moods she could not understand.

She had no intercourse with other children. When she had taken up her abode in the small town Frau Roland had resolutely repelled all social advances; her vanity could not endure that others should witness the plainness, although not absolute poverty, of her daily life. For the Roland fund sufficed to provide every necessary for the household, and Hedwig's only care was as to what would become of her child and herself when her mother's death should deprive them of their income.

Fate, however, spared her this bitter struggle. The beautiful eyes that had shed so many tears, and had gazed so yearningly into space, as if for one glimpse of her vanished youth and happiness, closed in eternal repose, and little Eva was alone.

She was but seven years old, but the full burden of her loss fell upon her childish soul and aroused in it wild, despairing anguish. Her agonized shrieks when her mother was carried from the house testified to the passionate woe that filled her little heart. And although the intensity of her grief faded with time, her steadfast longing for her dead mother was never stilled, nor did her lovely image and the memory of the tender care that had constituted the child's only happiness ever grow dim in her mind.

She lived now alone with her grandmother, whom this last blow had made still more irritable, and who did not even try to replace the mother to the child. The impatient complaints, the bitter accusations of fate, which the little girl did not understand, terrified her, and the doll with which she had played at her mother's feet was henceforth the sole object of her passionate affection. For Frau Roland did not understand how to furnish the childish intellect with quiet amusement, as the mother had done. She could not fill the poor, empty little heart with love. She was continually telling the child of all that she lacked compared with wealthy, happy children, not of what she might have possessed if Frau Roland had had the power and the will to do her duty.

Thus Eva's observation of the world's injustice grew keen, and if in spite of it the little girl was amiable and unenvious, it was because a good God had given her the disposition of an angel in compensation for so much of which she was deprived.

She did not even go to school, where she might have had playmates of her own age, because Frau Roland could not entertain the idea of her grandchild's associating with "all sorts of children." All the splendour of a lofty position she had lost, but she preferred obstinately to remain upon its cold, barren heights to descending into the green valley beneath.

Fortunately for little Eva, this life, alternating as it did between tempest and garish sunshine, lasted only one brief year. A sudden illness ended her grandmother's griefs and follies.

On this occasion the child did not wring her little hands in agony. Mutely and submissively she waited to see what might be in store for her.

The funeral took place, and the Zähringens were notified by the authorities that as the nearest relatives they were liable for the support of the child.

There had never been the least intercourse between Hedwig von Zähringen and her husband's relatives, and the inmates of the Zährenburg were most unpleasantly surprised by the duty thus imposed upon them.

The Oberforstmeister von Zähringen was now the owner of the estate. The existence of Hedwig and her child had been persistently ignored, and the haughty woman who held sway in the castle was not at all inclined to supply the place of mother to the orphan. They had but one child, a boy of fourteen; how could they admit to their home as his companion the grandchild of a man who, although acquitted, had once been under arrest as an incendiary? How receive as a daughter the child of a woman who, as Frau von Zähringen affirmed, had thrust herself into an ancient, noble family, and had shamefully disappointed all their hopes of wealth?



But the law inexorably refuses to yield to such arguments. The relatives could be compelled to maintain the child, and negotiations were pending as to what sum would suffice to relieve them from responsibility, when all doubts were suddenly ended, after a fashion to gratify even the Zähringens.

There appeared in a small vehicle an elderly woman, oddly attired, who proved to be a near relative of Eva's. This was Barbara Dornkraut, the elder sister of the deceased Frau Roland. The sisters had heard nothing of each other for many years; they had not agreed very well, the upright old maid, firm in principle and clear in her mind as to right and wrong, and the weak, silly woman, caring only for pleasure. Their paths diverged in early youth, for while Frau Roland and her husband were living in luxury and splendour, the plain, unattractive elder sister clung to her old father, and when he died her independent character led her to refuse all aid from the Rolands, and to accept a position as housekeeper to a learned man who lived a life of seclusion, buried in his books.

This step upon her part caused a final break between the sisters. Frau Roland, instead of valuing as she should the courage and independence that prompted Barbara's conduct, chose to consider it as a personal insult to herself, an attempt to humble

her pride, and she repudiated the sister who had thus wilfully accepted a subordinate position.

Barbara Dornkraut did not, however, forget as she was forgotten. She kept herself informed as to her sister's changing fortunes, and held herself ready to afford assistance when any such should be really necessary. So long as Frau Roland was placed beyond want, and gave no sign that her false pride was broken, or that she wished to see the sister of whom she had formerly been ashamed, Barbara judged it best to keep aloof from her, and not until she heard that little Eva, helpless and forsaken, was to be given over to the mercy of strangers did she emerge from her retirement. Her pride was outraged by the heartless conduct of the Zähringens, and she appeared before the authorities, offered proof that she was one of the child's next of kin, and demanded that she should be delivered up to her care. This was instantly done, and so the whole matter was at an end.

Eva listened eagerly and anxiously to the discussion concerning her, only half comprehending what was going on. The stern old woman who meant so well thought it unnecessary to explain it all to the child, or to expend any tenderness upon her. She briefly told her that she should take her with her, and should look for industry and implicit obedience from her; and she must be very quiet and gentle, since the gentleman who would kindly re-

ceive her beneath his roof could not bear a noise. She hastily examined the child as to her knowledge and acquirements, and expressed her surprise at her deficiencies in a way that sent the blood to Eva's cheeks. Then there was an immediate sale of Frau Roland's meagre effects. Even the child's toys were sold, for Aunt Barbara said that the time for play was past, and that Eva must learn now that life was a serious matter. The little girl uttered no complaint, but gazed wistfully at the objects once so dear to her, until hands were laid upon her favourite doll. Then she burst into tears and clasped it close in her arms.

"Do not be obstinate," her aunt admonished her; "you cannot play any longer, you must learn and work."

"I will, indeed I will!" sobbed the child. "I will never look at her except at night when I am going to bed. Let me keep her, let me keep her! She is my own little Minna, and we love each other so dearly!"

There was something so touching in this tenderness for a lifeless object in the poor little desolate heart, that even Aunt Barbara was softened. "Keep it, then," she said, and Eva withdrew, perfectly content, to her corner. The next morning she drove to the railway depot with her aunt, and after half a day's journey they reached the old Professor's abode. He lived just outside the gates of

the university town in which he held office. He was quite aged, and lived only for his books and learned pursuits. He had no intercourse with any one except a few of his brother professors. Herr Wilding led a perfectly secluded life, and could have found no woman so fitted to take charge of his household as was Barbara Dornkraut.

Neither envy nor spite found entrance here; luxury was unknown, as were also the freaks of fashion. The days passed in an orderly uniformity; to every hour its regular work was appointed,—work performed in profound quiet. This life had stamped a certain character upon the two members of the household. If Aunt Barbara's stern face had not imposed upon Eva a sense of respect that forbade all trifling, the child, accustomed to a degree of taste and elegance in her grandmother, would have found food for mirth in her aunt's hair cropped short that no time might be lost in its arrangement, her huge horn spectacles, and the large outside pocket that she wore, filled with a vast assortment of implements for domestic emergencies.

She was very dutiful and conscientious, but her conduct knew not the genial influence of affection. She faithfully did what she could for the child's mental and physical welfare, but the household was a joyless one. The old Professor, who had himself generously proposed that his trusted housekeeper should take her niece to live beneath his roof, found

his only enjoyment in his antiquarian collection. Fräulein Barbara found hers in the punctilious performance of her household duties and in the management of a charitable institution of which she was the directress.

On the whole, Eva preferred the Professor, who would sometimes absently pass his hand over her smooth hair, and by the caress remind her of her mother. He did not exact so much of her, and his voice was kinder than her aunt's when he showed her the heads of the Roman emperors on his coins, or explained to her the use of an antique cinerarium. And he fulfilled also a long-cherished desire of her heart by sending her to school, where she could learn with children of her own age. This new measure marvellously inspired and developed Eva's natural intelligence,—study was not only an occupation, it was a delight to her. True, she still had no playmates,—only school-mates,—for the Professor's house was strictly closed to the noisy world of childhood, but the intercourse at school with companions of her own age was good for her. When other children took walks into the fields on Sundays and holidays with their parents and friends, she patiently stayed in the silent house with Aunt Barbara, or sat at the table where the old man, whose life knew no holiday, was at work, and looked forward to the next day when her school-mates would tell her of the pleasures they had enjoyed.

Only once was there an interruption to the strict regularity and sobriety of this existence, and because it was such its memory was vividly preserved by the child in after-years like some carefully-guarded treasure.

A chronic complaint of the Professor's demanded serious treatment, and his physician prescribed change of air. After long discussion, the old man consented to visit the nearest and most insignificant watering-place, but refused to go thither alone. He was so completely a creature of habit, and had in the course of years become so dependent upon Fräulein Barbara's care and foresight, so accustomed to Eva's lovely face, that he could not summon courage sufficient to isolate himself from such surroundings. The consequence was that Fräulein Barbara and the child accompanied him, and the former continued to hold sway. The rule, however, could not be so absolute as heretofore. The energetic old woman was forced to adapt herself to circumstances, and to forego much that she had considered indispensable at home, while as for Eva she tasted a freedom hitherto unknown. The old Professor, who could not now spend his time among his books and antiquities, suddenly became aware of the lovely child living under his protection,—she was his companion in long walks on the shore, and in the evenings within-doors.

The little watering-place, that was but just be

ginning to give tokens of its after-celebrity, was chiefly the resort of families rich in children,—parents glad to afford their little ones the invigorating panacea of sea air, and to be released from the restraints and conventionalities of city life. The week before the Professor's return home there were arrangements made for a children's festival, and the subscription paper was sent to the old man.

If such a paper had been laid upon his study-table at home he would not have read it; here, during his tedious convalescence, he was accessible to everything. Indeed, since he had emerged from his world of petrifications and antiquity and entered upon the bright, living world of to-day, seeing daily the blue skies above him and the glorious ocean at his feet, his heart had grown larger and younger.

"Eva shall go," he said; and no objections that Aunt Barbara could urge availed to alter his decision.

The child's heart throbbed with anticipation when on the appointed afternoon she walked by the Professor's side across the square towards the Pump-room, and she cast down her dark eyes with a blush when here and there they encountered a glance of surprise at the odd couple.

She was delighted to be festally arrayed in her clean but faded gown, to which Aunt Barbara in an access of womanly sympathy had added a huge

scarf, yellow with age, from among her belongings; and the Professor, in his gray suit and a hat full of years and honours, so seldom was it worn, was in her childish eyes a presence fitted to command respect and veneration.

She soon found herself embarrassed and shy among the flock of children who stared at her in silence, with now and then a giggle. She mingled timidly in the games, but she was overlooked, and when at last a place was given her in a race, oh, dear! she tripped and fell. She was entirely unaccustomed to the merry children's plays, which had always seemed so attractive to her, and, blushing painfully, she brushed the dust from her holiday gown and returned mortified to her place. Mortified indeed, for the prettiest and most richly dressed of the little girls of her own age made merry over her mishap, and wondered, in a voice loud enough to be heard by Eva, "what hovel that little thing came from."

Eva sat still, feeling miserably clumsy and awkward, hardly looking up, until at last some of the children, the discourteous little beauty at their head, thronged about her. A game of forfeits was arranged, and each child had a name given it to which it must answer. Suddenly she heard the one bestowed upon her. Yes, she was not mistaken; the beauty was calling her, and beckoning kindly. With cheeks aglow, Eva sprang up to



obey the call, but an invisible hand detained her; she had been tied to her chair by her long, thick braids of hair, and by Aunt Barbara's piece of magnificence, and she was bound there still more firmly by the shout of the children at the success of their trick.

Hot tears rose to her lovely eyes, but the self-control she had so early learned kept them from flowing from beneath her drooping eyelids.

Suddenly a boyish voice, melodious even in its anger, fell upon her ear.

"For shame, Ulla! That was a mean trick, and odious of you," it said. "We will have the next game now; you know I drew the king's part, and I must choose my queen."

Eva cast a stolen glance at the speaker, who had a right to lay down the law thus, for he was a boy of fifteen, decidedly older than any of the other children.

"Yes, I must choose my queen," he went on; "and you must all obey us."

Pretty Ulla smoothed away the cloud on her brow, and looked expectant and eager, but the boy passed her by, and, taking a larger and a smaller wreath that had been prepared for the occasion, he came hastily up to Eva. "Will you be my queen?" he asked.

The child stared at him in surprise. "I?" she asked, incredulously.

"Yes, you, you," he answered, with smiling impatience; "and no one shall ever dare to make game of you again."

In an instant he had untied the torn scarf and hung the larger wreath about her like the ribbon of an order; then, before she could collect herself, she felt the wreath of roses upon her brow.

"How pretty you are!" said the boy, with naïve admiration. "Now cheer up and be merry!"

Her eye was caught by her own reflection in the tall mirror on the wall, and she could not but smile.

"But I cannot dance; I shall fall down again," she said, timidly.

"Not if I hold you up," he rejoined, in proud self-confidence; "and you really have nothing to do but to follow me."

Her childish heart was full to overflowing with delight as she looked up gratefully at her chivalrous champion.

He was a tall, handsome boy; his frank, kind eyes beamed with conscious happiness, and the proud, firm lines about his well-formed mouth spoke only of boyish assurance, not of obstinacy. Eva was and continued the queen of the little festival,—he had made her so, and Ulla's hostile glances produced no impression upon her. It was a happy day, and formed the brightest memory of her years of childhood. Especially did she cherish

in grateful remembrance her boyish protector. During the few days that remained of her stay by the sea she saw him several times, and on the morning of her departure he gave her a handful of shells that he had picked up on the shore.

This was their last meeting. She never saw him again; but at home, in the quiet house where Aunt Barbara was ever admonishing her to diligence, she often thought of that happy day. The Professor forgot her again. The brief ray of sunshine that had illumined her life faded, and the years passed as before. But at last a change came.

The Professor's niece, the mistress of a boarding-school in a neighbouring town, paid him a visit, and the old man conceived the idea of intrusting Eva to her charge for the completion of her education, since the girl was now fifteen and must be prepared to earn her own livelihood.

She acceded to his proposal with gratitude, for she knew how lonely she was in the world; and, conscious that she had nothing to depend upon save her own exertions, she applied herself to her studies with the greatest diligence.

It was high time that her future was marked out for her, for little more than six months after her removal to the boarding-school an epidemic carried off both her old protectors in one week, and she would again have been turned loose upon the world and left to the mercy of her haughty

relatives had not the Professor generously provided for her.

He bequeathed his small property to his niece, the principal of the school, upon condition that she should provide for Eva's maintenance and instruction until the young girl had passed her examinations and was fitted to maintain herself.

This point was made so clear in his will that Eva ought not to have felt any sense of dependence, but a right to what she received. Nevertheless, the shrewd schoolmistress never informed the girl clearly as to this, but impressed upon her her own benevolence, representing to her as simply a wish expressed by the deceased what was in reality a legal condition affixed to her acceptance of her uncle's legacy. Thus Eva thought Fräulein Wilding perfectly justified in requiring that all her leisure hours before her examinations should be devoted to service in the school, and that after her examinations she should accept a post as teacher there for some years without salary. Her artistic talent furnished her the wherewithal to supply her simple wardrobe. The fans painted by her were charming little works of art, and the half-holidays, when she could shut herself up in her garret-room and work at them, were the brightest of her life.

Those were the only hours in which she could live for herself, when she could summon in memory the long-vanished days when she had been protected

by her mother's love. Then a longing for a home and happiness would arise within her, a youthful desire for freedom and its joys, for human beings among whom she should belong of right.

On such an afternoon in spring we have found her. The one happy memory of her childhood, the little festival by the sea, where the stranger boy had so kindly and proudly befriended her, and she had been the queen of a blissful fleeting hour, had been vividly before her, and had illuminated the fan with the tiny figures recalling Cinderella's splendour. And suddenly a light as from fairy-land had burst upon her own existence and surrounded it with what seemed to her all but the radiance of magic.

Her departure with Herr Roland shortly ensued, and a new and undreamed-of world opened before her. The wonders of nature and the glories of art replaced the burdens hitherto laid upon her youthful soul, and her dark eyes reflected in their grateful glances the beauty revealed to them.

Herr Roland had as yet formed no resolve as to where to take up his abode. He was desirous that Eva should see something of the world before allowing her wishes to influence his plans. He accepted her childlike affection without a remonstrance, and his indifference often yielded to the charm of her beauty and simple goodness. She rejoiced at every victory thus won, and hoped to

win him back to life again, and to reconcile him to the humanity that he despised.

Poor Eva, how little she knew him! In his desolated nature no kindly emotion made any real impression. His hard experiences were graven deep upon the brazen tablets of his memory, and now that he revisited the scene of his former misery, he perused them daily and hourly. The young girl at his side recalled to him his daughter's image. The contrast between the haughty Zährenburg and the neglected grave beside which he had stood excited within him a savage hatred of the Zähringens, and all the strength of his nature was concentrated there.

He did not talk of them, but he made investigations concerning them, informing himself as to their circumstances, and sparing neither pains, time, nor money in order to gain an insight into the life of the different members of the family. Death had been busy among them, and had snatched those most guilty from his vengeance. The son alone was living of the man who had thrust forth from their home Hedwig and her child, and had refused to receive the desolate orphan.

He was still a young man, the present possessor of the castle, and the world esteemed him happy. Whereat Herr Roland shrugged his shoulders. What was happiness in his eyes? A leaf tossed to and fro by the wind, a brilliant bubble vanishing in clear air.

### CHAPTER III

WHEN, lured aside from the high-road by the view of the valley with its robe of green, you stroll along the brook, leaping clear as silver from its mountain home, you will reach, through a forest of hemlock, and past the iron hammers of a forge, a broad and stately eminence, whereon and about which lies the estate of the family of Von Zähringen.

The old castle, originally of much smaller dimensions than at present, had been enlarged and altered according to the taste of successive proprietors, thereby, perhaps, losing some of its unique beauty, but certainly none of its romantic loveliness, which it owed in great measure to its magnificent surroundings.

The last improvement, or rather repairs, seemed to be of quite recent date, for the newly-hewn blocks of stone showed bright in the gray moss-grown walls, and the southern wing sported a row of gleaming panes of glass, that seemed to flout the gothic arched windows of the tower that flanked it, boasting only small octagonal leaded panes in its casements. A couple of balconies all overgrown with ivy decorated the chief front, the green trailing

branches having been carefully trained so as not to hide the scutcheon of the Zähringens that stood out in bold relief in the centre of the building.

A pennant of the Zähringen colours fluttered merrily in the morning breeze from the tower of the northern wing, scaring away the rooks that were wont to take shelter there, for at present the snow lay white and shining on window embrasures and buttresses, on the arches and stone rosettes of the ornamentation, lending a delicate, effective charm to the gray old walls.

Delightful as it must have been here in the spring, when the old lindens were in bloom, when the swallows skimmed the clear air, and the gaze might wander across villages, meadows, and forests to follow the smoke of the distant locomotive, it was terribly lonely in winter.

About noon on this cold day in January a carriage drove slowly up the frozen road, rough and broken from the storms of winter. Various articles of baggage were strapped on behind. A servant sat upon the box beside the postilion,—a species of driver then becoming very rare,—and from the window Eva's fresh, rosy face looked out from where she sat, muffled in furs and wraps, beside her grandfather.

Eight months of happy independence had worked an evident change in her appearance; her colour was brighter, and the glance of her fine eyes more



assured and observant. She gazed from the window with eager interest at every turn of the road uttering from time to time some exclamation of delight, making some remark, or even addressing some question to the old man beside her, whose answers were brief and cold. He had protected himself well from the severity of the weather; beneath his fur cloak he was wrapped in a coarse poncho, such as is worn by the Mexican rancheros, and his feet were clad in huge fur boots. Now that all trace had vanished of the profound emotion that had possessed him on that spring evening when he found his grandchild, and no softening expression informed his stern features, the dark wrinkle on his forehead between his bushy eyebrows lent a look of extreme severity to his countenance.

He was very silent, gazing apparently absently into space, but when any impeding stone or unevenness of the unfrequented road caused a jolt of the carriage, an angry gleam in his eye or an irritable exclamation showed that his self-control was far from perfect.

Suddenly the postilion put his horn to his lips, the castle was scarcely three hundred feet in front of them, and "Morgenroth, Morgenroth," the favorite tune of all postilions, rang out through the quiet winter air.

The tones were clear and full, and the young girl listened with evident pleasure.

"Morgenroth—— Do you remember the air grandpapa?" she asked.

He nodded:

" ' Yestermorn to battle hieing,  
Now shot through the heart he's dying,  
On the morrow in the grave!'

Any one who has had practical experience of all that does not easily forget it."

"Ah," she said, smiling, "but you have risen again, grandfather; the poor dragoon stayed in his grave."

He looked fixedly at her for a moment, and then said, "The Roland of thirty years ago is dead, Eva. He who sits beside you is a very different man."

She made no rejoinder, for the carriage stopped at the door of the entrance-hall. Upon the broad snowy steps appeared a simply-dressed housekeeper. The servant sprang from the box, and helped his master and mistress to alight.

They entered a lofty octagonal hall, its light-coloured walls hung with old portraits in faded frames.

"My orders were to heat a few of the rooms. I received no description as to which they were to be, and can only hope I have chosen well," the housekeeper said, with a respectful curtsy, to Herr Roland. "As we are all strange here, we did not know what your Grace might desire."

"Your Grace!" the old man muttered, angrily "I am *Herr Roland*, as you must have learned from my letters. Remember that for the future! I grant no grace, but am easily irritated by superfluous phrases. And, besides, all here will obey the commands and desires of my grandchild, Fräulein von Zähringen, who, of course, can allow herself to be called as she pleases."

The young girl probably felt the harsh bluntness of these words; she hastily laid aside her veil and nodded kindly. "I am Eva von Zähringen," she said to the dismayed housekeeper; "address me according to the custom of the country."

The lovely face and the clear, frank eyes that were revealed upon the removal of the veil reassured the troubled woman, who curtsied gratefully, and preceded the new-comers up a broad marble staircase, along a spacious corridor, and then down a few steps, by which they reached a wing of the castle where were apartments comfortably furnished in modern style, evidently the customary abode of the former owners here. The furniture was handsome and convenient, the rooms were well warmed, and from the windows there was a view of the snow-clad valley. The housekeeper took off her young mistress's hat and furs, opened a door to show two rooms that she had prepared for Herr Roland, and then asked at what hour she should order dinner.

"In half an hour." Herr Roland gave orders, although he had just declared that his grandchild was to be obeyed in everything. "We must warm ourselves and look about us before we can feel at home in this strange place."

He opened one room after another, all giving an impression of modern elegance, but utterly wanting in the air of being inhabited. There was nothing lying about, not a book, no piece of embroidery, not even a toy; the bare tables and shelves, the chairs ranged stiffly along the walls, produced a most dreary and uncomfortable impression.

The old man, however, appeared to perceive nothing of this; he strode through the apartments, examining them coldly, and then silently walked to a window.

"It is infernally lonely up here," he said, after a while. "No winter residence for you. We must arrange all that later."

"Why, grandfather? It is so delightful to be on one's own soil and estate; it gives one such a home-like feeling," the girl said. "Solitude and I are good friends, and the former proprietors must have passed many winter months here."

He nodded: "Yes; one's own soil and estate. You are right, Eva, there is a strong and strange attraction there. It asserts itself even after long years of wandering abroad over the face of the earth. But I can make you another home down there in

the valley among your kind; you like them. If we have come up here in this cold winter weather it is because I am an old man and have no time to lose. Possession must be taken as soon as possible."

He drew from the breast-pocket of his coat a large folded paper, to which several seals were attached, and after hastily reading it over, said, as he handed it over his shoulder to his granddaughter, "There, take it, Eva; it is the deed of sale of the Zährenburg. The castle is yours, with its fields, meadows, and forests, and the smoking forge yonder; it all belongs to you. You are richer than any one who has hitherto borne the name of Zähringen."

She looked at him in speechless amazement that was almost dismay, as he calmly continued, "Now you possess what was yours of right, and much, much more, as if it were, as it ought to have been, your paternal inheritance. No, no!" he said, gently repulsing her, as in an impulse of affectionate gratitude she would have thrown her arms about his neck. "You owe me nothing; at my death it would all have been yours, and you would have owed me no thanks; regard it in that light. It is an inheritance before the death of the testator, nothing more, and it was my express desire that the Zährenburg should not pass from me to you, but that you, a Zähringen, should be the purchaser, as your rela-

tives were years ago. The property has been rescued for you to-day for the second time: see that you value it accordingly, Eva;" he went on, raising his voice, "more than did your father or the cursed rabble who thrust you forth into poverty and want! For this hour, for these acres, I have laboured and watched and starved, yes, starved," he said, sharply, as the girl's brilliant eyes opened wide with a startled gaze, "and I couple a condition with their possession. You must never, while you live, sell or in any wise forfeit the Zährenburg; it must be yours until your death, and own no other master save yourself, or him to whom you may, in your folly, resign yourself."

"That is yourself, grandfather," she said, with a smile; "I have been yours so short a time, God will surely grant us many years in which you shall be sole director here!"

"Only as your steward and in your name," he said, obstinately, "and hereafter——"

"The future is in God's hand. I will not look beyond your life," she said, simply. "But I will fulfil your condition; there is my hand upon it. And now do accept my thanks, grandfather," she entreated, earnestly, offering him her rosy lips to be kissed. "The delight of being grateful is so new to me, do not deprive me of it."

He barely touched her lips with his own, as he patted her on the shoulder. "The castle is an ex-

tensive old pile," he said, "but all that was ruinous or out of repair has been put in order. After dinner we will explore it, and you can select the rooms that you wish to have arranged for your occupation."

"Let them be those where I lived with my mother," she said, eagerly. "You know which they were, and I shall feel then as though she were about me, watching over me."

The shade upon Herr Roland's brow grew darker. The memories that were so consoling to Eva always caused him pain. "They were these rooms, and these," he said, curtly, touching several doors. "You stand in the midst of where she held her brief reign. Come here," he continued, grasping the girl's delicate wrist and drawing her with him through the suite of rooms, until they stood upon a narrow landing at the foot of a winding staircase and opposite a huge door of carved oak. "Come, perhaps the door is open, and here the greatest error of her—no, of my life, received the blessing of a priest."

The door was unlocked, yielding to his pressure, and they stood in a lofty apartment, beautifully wainscoted in dark wood, with stamped leather hangings, and adorned with valuable old pictures. It was icy cold here, but the brilliant sunshine coming through the painted glass of the high arched window lent the large room an appearance at least of warmth.

"Look here," he said; "here the marriage took place, for at that time the chapel was in a ruinous condition. Here I gave my only child to the man whom she loved; here I surrendered to him all my right to her; here I gave her my blessing, and here—here—I curse all who bear the name of Zähringen!"

"Grandfather!" the girl exclaimed, in horror, "what do you mean? My name is Zähringen,—recall your words!"

The old man passed his hand across his brow, as if to recollect himself.

"Yes, yes; so it is," he said; "I forgot. I was for a moment the fool of years gone by. My blessing effected nothing, and my curse will be alike powerless. Mere phrases—words: deeds alone are real."

"But words are the expression of our feeling, grandfather," Eva said, entreatingly, "and their cruelty strikes not only my ear, but my heart! This is my first day here, grandfather; give me your blessing. I believe in it, and I will deserve it."

He withdrew the hand that she had clasped in hers, and turned away.

"It would avail you nothing," he said, gloomily, "and for me it would be a farce. Human beings carry curses and blessings in themselves. Come, it is cold here, and you are shivering. That was a



warm May day, and the trees were white, not with snow, but with blossoms."

She followed him silently and obediently back to the warm, comfortable room, gazing after him with a troubled look as he paced restlessly to and fro. Suddenly she seemed to bethink herself; she took heart and said, with cheerful determination, "Yes, grandfather, I will believe what you say,—that the blessing lies in ourselves. You have given me much, and many human beings must look to me for care and aid. I will do all the good I can,—will try hard to relieve misery and to spread happiness around me; that will bring it to myself."

He shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps," he said, doubtfully.

"Oh, no; certainly," she rejoined, in a tone of conviction. "Love is so much more powerful than hatred; I am sure it can turn curses into blessings."

## CHAPTER IV.

It was a matter of great interest, not only to the neighbouring gentry and to the inhabitants of the little town that could be seen from the Zährenburg, upon the bank of the small river, but even among fashionable circles in the capital, that Eva von Zähringen, whose very existence had so long been forgotten, was now reinstated in the home of her ancestors, whence she had once been so cruelly thrust forth into the world.

It was known that old Roland had returned immensely, nay, fabulously wealthy, and any one could see that Eva possessed both grace and beauty in no ordinary degree, but this was almost all that transpired concerning them. The persistent inaccessibility of the old man, who trampled upon all conventionalities, as well as the distaste felt both in aristocratic and financial circles for the means he had employed to acquire the Zährenburg for his granddaughter, acted like a barrier between the young girl and all approach from the outside world.

The castle was restored with such care and taste as had never been expended upon it before, and the

new methods and implements employed by Herr Roland in the cultivation and improvement of the estate, assisted as they were by wealth and energy, gave an impetus to its prosperity and developed a new and stirring industry in its various parts.

None of the old servants had been retained, every one had been changed, down to the smallest goatherd, and tradition had no influence in the new management of the house in which Herr Roland held an iron sway. For although everything was regulated and arranged in Eva's name, all knew that whatever savoured of harshness proceeded directly from Herr Roland, while she was the quiet dispenser of benefits and kindness of which the poor and needy had much to tell.

The summers only were passed at the castle by the old man and his grandchild; the wandering, adventurous life which he had led could not but assert its influence. He could not remain in the quiet castle when winter circumscribed his activity and the busy life on the river was mute, when snow lying deep over the valley at once dazzled and wearied the gaze.

Then Herr Roland would arrange matters for the winter, Eva would make provision for the comfort of her beneficiaries, and they would leave home for the capital; not to seek pleasure in any familiar social intercourse,—they made only a few, merely travelling acquaintances; the theatre, con-

certs, lectures, and picture-galleries occupied Eva's time during the winter months.

This was not exactly the life of which the young girl had dreamed,—not the quiet, familiar home-life that she had hoped for, at least in summer, but there was much to enjoy in it, and she accepted its pleasures gratefully. And not only was her mind developed and her knowledge increased by this widening of her horizon, but constant, daily intercourse with a man like her grandfather ripened her judgment and made her independent in thought and action. Doubtless it was this portion of her character that Herr Roland, whether consciously or unconsciously, sought to develop, for the wealth that she was to inherit from him would depend for its value upon the clear-sightedness and energy she might bring to its administration.

Perhaps a presentiment that he should not long be by her side to protect her induced him to make a special effort to sharpen her perception of men and their motives, for when the lindens were shedding their blossoms for the second time after his arrival at the castle he was carried down into the valley wrapped in his last sleep.

\* \* \* \* \*

All was very quiet in and about the Zährenburg. Towers and balconies stood out sharply against the blue of the summer skies, and the windows

shone in the clear morning light. Not a breath of air stirred the leaves of the old trees; everything lay brooding in calm peace and beauty. The sashes of the windows in the left wing, which was buried in refreshing shade, were open, and in one of the rooms, at a table covered with papers, sat Eva von Zähringen.

The apartment thus occupied was very plainly furnished, and the revolver and rifle on the wall showed that it had been the old man's study. No article of luxury was to be found here; the sofa, covered with some dark stuff, was the only piece of furniture suggesting comfort or convenience, and the books in the bookcase bore witness rather to agricultural studies than to intellectual enjoyment.

Eva was alone; and as she sat bending over the papers lying before her, it was evident that time had developed her beauty and had given it an individual expression. There are many days in two years, and each one moulds and models imperceptibly as it passes not only our outward presentment but our inner being. Men and circumstances, the manner in which the past is remembered and the future anticipated, even the solitude which induces and encourages a habit of introspection, all work together to strengthen or to weaken our individual characteristics. \*

The young girl's clear, beautiful eyes were just as

frank and serious as formerly, but they had lost their old dreamy, resigned expression. The repose and self-control in the nobly-chiselled features showed that the girl's soul had been liberated, and that she knew how to prize its freedom.

She wore deep mourning, for Herr Roland had been buried only a few days before; and there were sad lines about the youthful mouth that even the golden daylight streaming in at the window failed to efface.

The blossoms and fragrance of summer, the beauty and vigorous life of nature, so sure to awaken yearnings for a fuller happiness, brought vividly to her mind the consciousness that she was again alone in the world.

It is true that the thought did not terrify her as it had done in her childhood, when she was discussed and pushed about like some chattel, but she had felt profound sorrow as she gazed after the coffin as it was borne away, attended—with but few exceptions only—by servants and dependants. She had followed the little procession with her eyes, from which she brushed the tears, until it vanished in a winding of the road—forever!

She had not enjoyed any fulness of affection beside the embittered old man, but she knew from countless trifles that she was dear to him; and if there had been for her none of the true domestic happiness for which she sighed, he had given her a

home where she had found protection and freedom, and every pleasure that she had enjoyed had been a gift from his hand.

At first he had apparently paid her but small attention, repulsing her affectionate advances in secret dread lest she should be trying to obtain undue influence over him. But in spite of his coldness and reserve her beauty and goodness had warmed his reluctant heart, and the spirit of mistrust that poisoned his existence vanished before her incorruptible integrity of character. Thus the tie between them had become a very close one.

And she had been careful not to annoy him by any want of consideration in the expression of her wishes. She was so little used to society, why should she make any effort to mingle among the men whom he avoided and despised? The glories of the summers spent at the Zährenburg, and the sights of the city in the winter, entirely sufficed her.

There had been no relations established either with the landed proprietors or with the large manufacturers in the vicinity. Herr Roland had rather ostentatiously avoided all intercourse with his neighbours. The morose old man heeded no advance, nor did he seem to perceive the occasional disdain manifested for him. He knew no one and nothing outside of Eva and himself.

And yet the ill-assorted couple were the objects

of a wide-spread interest. The more strictly Herr Roland debarred his granddaughter from every approach from without, the more eloquent became the charm of her great beauty, surrounded as it was by the halo of enormous wealth.

To one person alone was she known, and one who had never either courted or shunned her acquaintance. This was the physician of the neighbouring small town, an old man, who had been the medical adviser of the former inmates of the Zährenburg, and whom, for that very reason, Herr Roland had called on most reluctantly on an occasion when Eva had sprained her ankle. Fortunately, however, Dr. Jordan was reserved and taciturn, apparently as desirous to avoid any reference to the past as was Herr Roland himself, so that there was no occasion for any stern rebuff. The cool demeanour preserved by each of the men towards the other, never transgressing the bounds of the merest courtesy, was never altered, although Eva's case was a tedious one and demanded constant visits from the physician. The young girl, on the contrary, awakened his decided interest as he came to be more and more familiar with the household of the Zährenburg. Her simplicity and goodness, the genuine warmth of sympathy that she evinced in her desires and opinions, the patience and unselfishness shown in her conduct towards the old man with whom she passed her life



without a sigh for the youthful pleasures that were denied her, all inspired him with an admiration that in the course of time deepened in warmth, until he felt for her a degree of almost paternal affection. To her his visits, during which, when Herr Roland was not present, he was always cheerful and agreeable, constituted one of her greatest pleasures. He admired her sketches and her flowers, he provided her with books to read, and told her of his professional visits among the poor in the valley, associating her with him in many a humane and generous act, thus fostering the mutual regard and esteem existing between the girl and himself.

And now, when the peaceful waters of her existence had been troubled anew by the apoplectic stroke that caused Herr Roland's death, she had a faithful friend in the physician. He was by her side in the last hours of her grandfather's life. There was but a short, unconscious struggle for the existence so lightly prized; death speedily conquered, and extinguished the vital spark.

At this time, when the sense of her loneliness was most present to her, the excellent influence exercised upon her mind by her life with her grandfather became evident; constant and exclusive intercourse with him had strengthened her character and given her self-control. His experience had ripened her youthful judgment and sharpened her apprehension without embittering her

disposition. She had grown prudent and thoughtful where he was cold and suspicious; her heart was confirmed in goodness and kindness instead of in the harshness of which he rather made a parade.

She gathered herself together and looked around her; life offered her no love nor delight, and, on the other hand, no struggle. There was an enormous difference between now and formerly, when the child saw her mother borne to the church-yard; when she followed Aunt Barbara to the gloomy, joyless house after her grandmother's death; when she lost in the Professor her last earthly protector, and learned at Fräulein Wilding's to know the utter sorrow of homelessness and dependence.

Now at least she was free and independent; the wealth at her command could afford her the delight of gladdening the hearts of others, since she had come of age just before her grandfather's death, and there was no necessity for any guardianship. Herr Roland had arranged his affairs with an almost painful exactitude; he left her advice and counsel wonderfully adapted to a young girl's power of comprehension, as to the management of her great wealth, cautioning her not to be a tool in the hands of the lawyer whom he recommended to her. She was at liberty to make whatever disposition she pleased of her property, with the sole exception of the Zährenburg, which was to be hers

during her lifetime and then to devolve upon her children.

These were the dispositions that he had put into writing in view of the possibility of his death. There was no will devising even the smallest legacy to any individual or to any institution, charitable or otherwise; no message, no remembrance to any human being with whom he had formerly been intimate.

Eva knew no one to whom she could intrust the examination of his private papers; she could not endure the idea of exposing to stranger eyes the wounds that had bled for so many years in a heart once generous and unselfish. Therefore she undertook the task herself, carefully going over all the papers arranged with such order in the various drawers of his writing-table. There were deeds of purchase, receipts, mortgages, and government bonds, contracts with tenants and farmers, and, at last, a small packet, minute indeed in comparison with the rest, labelled "Memoranda and private correspondence."

As Eva tore off the covering some yellow sheets dropped on the table, and the first that she looked over was the letter of long ago from her grandmother expressing her doubts of her husband's honour. It was plain that the words had been read many times; although they must have been graven on the old man's very soul; still this visible sign

had helped to harden his heart in implacable resentment.

Then came the letter from Eva's father refusing Herr Roland any assistance. It was the first time that she had seen his handwriting, this was the first direct token she had had of his life. She had not even the smallest memento of him. The father whom no one ever mentioned in her presence had no existence even in her imagination until conjured up there by her grandfather's narrative. Now he suddenly seemed close beside her,—those intensely egotistical expressions came from his innermost heart, and her own throbbed fast, as though she was listening to the sound of his voice.

Deeply moved she laid the sheet aside; she suffered terribly; she could not tell whether most for him who had endured so much or for him who had inflicted the pain. The letter informing Herr Roland of his daughter's death was also among these papers. The writer described vividly the circumstances that had broken her heart, dwelling with unsparing emphasis upon the conduct of the Zähringens. The sheet still bore traces of tears that had fallen upon it. Had they dropped in secret from the eyes of the lonely, embittered man, until, by and by, his heart had turned to stone, until he was capable only of a desire for revenge?

Perhaps;—thus only could she explain to herself the last letter, a letter not addressed to Herr Roland,

but to herself. Upon the envelope, in her grandfather's handwriting, were the words, "Answered in Eva's name."

With mingled curiosity and fear she unfolded the letter, of the existence of which she had hitherto been wholly ignorant. The writer must have been a stranger to her, for the handwriting was entirely unfamiliar, and the letter began with "Madam."

Repressing, with no small amount of self-control, the surmises and suspicions that came crowding into her mind, she read as follows :

"Although we two are the last of the Zähringen name I do not venture to advance the claim of relationship,—of a tie which so many miserable circumstances have combined to sunder. As a man overwhelmed with misfortunes I appeal to the magnanimity of a woman.

"I do not propose to comment upon the manner in which your grandfather has recovered the Zährenburg for you, causing me to succumb completely in the unequal contest. I know now that grievous wrong has been done him as well as you, madam, and the satisfaction desired by different men for wrong suffered is as various as are the hearts cherishing such desires. Herr Roland may find his in the complete ruin which he has brought upon me.

"After the experience that I have had of his disposition towards me, I cannot summon resolution sufficient to ask a favour of him,—an act that must

under any circumstances be most difficult of performance. Neither the loss of my position nor my property could have induced me to take this step; such possessions weigh but little in my eyes compared with what I now have at stake, and which moves me to appeal to your kindness.

“A wound in the head, received during the last war, has produced an affection of the nerves of my eyes. Having but just recovered from an attack of inflammation of the brain, it is of great importance, as far as my eyesight is concerned, that I should not leave my room for some time to come. The castle is so spacious that I venture to ask you to allow me to occupy the retired apartment where I now am until the severe cold of January is over, and I can take my departure without risk. Great care shall be taken to avoid any personal intrusion. Perhaps, indeed, you do not propose to occupy the Zährenburg during the winter, but will see it first in all the leafy beauty of spring.

“I am not wanting in courage to meet the blows of fate, but in order to do so I must be in the full possession of my faculties. It is not hard to die, but it is terrible for a man of eight-and-twenty to look forward to a long life, maimed and helpless.

“It is no doubt of your readiness to grant my request that makes me hesitate to prefer it. I learn from my own consciousness that I should be doing you a gross injustice were I to suspect that

you could find any satisfaction in the possible misery of a man who, with all the will in the world, cannot atone for former wrong done to you and yours. What would deter me is a natural diffidence in asking a favour of one who has been injured, and only the earnest desire of my physician that I should thus fulfil a duty to my mother, as well as to myself, conquers my reluctance.

"I await your reply, madam, and can only express my gratitude by the cordial and sincere desire that you may find in the Zährenburg a lasting happiness in harmony with its outward beauty.

"WALDEMAR VON ZÄHRINGEN."

It was with a feeling of dismay that Eva put down the letter. What had Herr Roland said when he "answered in Eva's name"? She suffered at the thought of the writer's possible hard fate. How gladly would she have aided him in every way, since he spoke of an unequal contest and of complete ruin!

But she had heard so little of him she did not even know where he was at present; the date of this letter was more than two years old. Who was there to have told her anything of these relatives?—she had so few acquaintances, and all the former servants had been dismissed.

She grew restless and unhappy in wondering why her grandfather had withheld this letter from her,

and in remembering his implacable obstinacy. Hitherto she had entertained a feeling of lofty scorn for all her paternal relatives; but suddenly one of them appeared before her in an entirely new light, and her disdain was transformed to compassion. His frank manner of addressing her, equally removed from arrogance and servility, the manly way in which he alluded to his misfortunes, and the sincere wish for her welfare expressed in the conclusion of his note inspired her with sympathy.

Her newly-awakened interest called up in her mind an image of the writer, to which compassion lent a charm. She might easily inform herself about him by applying to Doctor Jordan, who was her faithful friend, and she determined to bestow her confidence fully and frankly upon the old man. She carefully searched through the papers before her to gain some further intelligence with regard to this matter, but finding none, she put them all away, and tried by busying herself with something else to divert her mind from the subject. In vain. Her solitude and lack of all intercourse with others oppressed her.

The last words of her cousin's letter recurred constantly to her mind. "Yes," she mused, with a melancholy smile, "it is lovely here, a fitting abode for joy; but how is that ever to be mine?"



## CHAPTER V.

THE good doctor was a venerable old man, and when Eva in the afternoon of the next day presented herself in his study to ask his aid and advice, his expression was more kindly and paternal than any she had ever seen upon Herr Roland's face.

"Not ill, then. I am glad of that, Fräulein Eva," he said, retaining her hand in his. "I have no cause, therefore, to exercise my prerogative and scold you for not sending for me. Do you know that you make me very proud by asking of me any service that is not professional?"

She smiled gently, and then said, gravely, "It is not exactly a service that I am come to request of you. I want to offer you my confidence. Will you accept it?"

With youthful warmth he pressed the little hand that lay in his. "You can show me no greater kindness, Fräulein Eva! Be sure I will show myself worthy of the confidence that ranks me among your friends."

She shook her head sadly. "Among—— Ah, my dear doctor, I am very poor in this regard. I

have no friends except yourself. I have had neither time nor opportunity to make them. I have been passed from one hand to another, and have always lived in seclusion. I have some questions to ask you," she continued, as Doctor Jordan was silent, "and I hope you will not attribute them to idle curiosity. My grandfather has told me that you were the friend and physician of my relatives on my father's side; do you know where Waldemar von Zähringen lives, and what has become of him?"

He gazed at her in surprise, as if to discover in her face the motive for this unexpected inquiry, and then said, cautiously and with some hesitation, "I was the physician of the family, but not the friend. A difference in our views of life greater even than in our social rank divided us by a gulf, across which the only bridge was the professional service that I rendered. There was, however, one tie between myself and the Zährenburg, and that consisted in the paternal interest I took in the young Baron Waldemar of whom you have just spoken. I have no children, but had Heaven granted me a son, I should have been proud to have him resemble him."

She assented. "Since, then, you take such an interest in him, you can surely tell me how this letter which I have found among my grandfather's papers was answered."

He glanced at the sheet that she unfolded and

handed to him, and then gave it back to her. "I know its contents and the reply, which I was not mistaken in supposing, as I always have done, did not come from you. Answer me one question, if you please. Do you know that your father's family did you unpardonable wrong?"

She bowed her head in mute distress.

"Do you know of the after-relations between your grandfather and the Zähringens?"

"No," she replied, with a premonition that she was about to hear what would pain her. "I believed, or rather I hoped, for the sake of all, that they had entirely ceased, until an obscure allusion in this letter caused me to suspect that there had been some intercourse between them. I have no one of whom to inquire concerning these things save yourself; I pray you to be frank with me. Do not be afraid of hurting me. I am no spoiled child, and I prize the truth above all else."

"My dear little girl," the old man said, again taking her hand paternally in his own, "you had better not insist; I know that my information will pain you, and what is done cannot be undone. Even your grandfather, wanting in gentleness and tenderness as he was, took care in this matter not to distress you; why should you ask me to do so?"

"Because you promised to be my friend," she replied. "Is what you have to tell me so terrible, then?"

"For you, from what I know of you, yes; a magnanimous nature like your own cannot approve what Herr Roland did. The world and the Zähringens in especial did him a great wrong, and if after everything that he had suffered from fate and from mankind that wrong remained graven in his memory, if years only served to nourish his hatred and embitter his mind, it was human, and perhaps pardonable. But when he punished the innocent with the guilty, when he disdained no means to gratify his insatiate thirst for revenge, when to ruin him he used your name that the humiliation might be more complete,—you require frankness of me, Fräulein Eva,—his conduct was inexcusable. Forgive me," he added, hastily, as he saw her cast down her eyes, as though she were herself attainted of unworthiness. "I am an old blockhead; you did not ask for my opinion, but for facts. You see, my dear, my old heart has gone through so much grief for Waldemar von Zähringen that it will break out angrily sometimes. It shall not do so again, you may be sure. I will confine myself strictly to facts, which will, unfortunately, speak for themselves. But I must begin far back in order that you may understand this letter before I tell you of the answer it received.

"The Oberforstmeister von Zähringen took possession of the estate when your father died, and you know from one more competent to tell you

than I—who did not live here at the time—how it all came about. Well, no blessing rested upon his deeds, although during several years everything seemed to go on smoothly, for the Oberforstmeister was constituted very differently from your father, having no disposition to squander his property, but endeavouring, on the contrary, to increase it. He might easily have done so had he gone more wisely to work, and had not his conduct towards your mother and yourself injured his credit and standing with others.

“At first he was content with the splendid estate that had as it were fallen into his lap, and for a time it seemed as though he needed nothing more to satisfy him save his home and his fine, handsome boy. I wish you could have known Waldemar then, so frank and joyous, so brave and true. I wish you knew him now. The frank joyousness of those days has succumbed to misfortune, but the brave, true heart is unchanged.

“Look,” he continued, taking up a little photograph from his table, “those are the kind, merry eyes with which as a boy he gazed out upon the world that he sees no longer.”

Eva did not heed the significance of his last words as she took the little picture eagerly. She did not return it at once; her gaze rested with delight and surprise upon the bright, boyish face, and in an instant the girl's serious eyes beamed

with warmth and sunshine. Forgotten were all the long years of her joyless childhood; one happy hour emerged from the sad past and smiled at her from those merry eyes. The Professor's quiet house and the gloomy school-room vanished as by a magician's wand; the little village by the sea arose in their stead, and she was once again the rose-crowned queen of the childish festival.

"It is he of whom I have so often thought," she said at last, in a voice that trembled slightly; "and after so gladdening my poor little heart the first request he made of me died away unheard! Yes, this is he; it is the face that has lived in my memory all these years."

"You knew him?" the old man asked, surprised and incredulous; "you saw him, then, at the Zahrenburg; but were you not much too young to have any distinct remembrance of him?"

"It was not there," she said; "I will tell you some other time where it was; now I can only say that I owe to him an hour of supreme happiness. He kindly stood my friend when I was a poor, forsaken child. Go on, my dear doctor, tell me everything—everything; I owe him a debt of gratitude."

The old man's wrinkled face beamed with delight; he felt doubly drawn towards the young girl since she knew and admired his favourite.

"Well, then," he said,—“but we had not come to Waldemar,—I was telling you of his father, the

Oberforstmeister. He was, it is true, proud of his son, but the older the latter became the more widely different were the characteristics he developed from those which his father possessed and could comprehend. Consequently, any genuine mutual confidence could not exist between them. It is strange that an only son, in whom his parents' hopes and affections ought to centre, should differ from them so utterly; that no influence of training or education should avail to bring him near to them. Waldemar's heart was a diamond resisting all outward force, and showing in its glow and sparkle the fine qualities with which the Creator had endowed it.

"He was carefully educated; you will forgive me for saying that I helped to stimulate his love of study and of science. What pleasant hours we have had in forest and field, my young friend and I! and this little room too could tell a tale of pleasures enjoyed together. I am an old fellow myself, but my love for that joyous, merry boy kept my heart from growing old. I loved him like a son.

"Whilst Waldemar was, without denying himself the pleasures of his age, studying hard, his father was not idle in another direction. The disease of the age, the frantic desire for the quick and easy acquirement of wealth, had attacked him and induced him to embark in industrial projects of which he understood nothing. He thought only

of the brilliant results of such undertakings, never reflecting upon the labour and pains, the prudent foresight and strict superintendence that make such results possible. He supposed it would be sufficient to invest his capital in some industrial scheme to have it double itself in a few years. Heaven knows what turned his attention to the founding of iron-works, but so it was; he attempted their establishment without sufficient means to carry out his scheme, and even at the very first lost an immense amount of money. He fell into the hands of unprincipled engineers, who enriched themselves at his expense, and each year his losses increased. But the Oberforstmeister either could not or would not retire from his undertaking; he staked his entire fortune upon its success, and with inconceivable obstinacy refused to allow his son to examine into his affairs.

“Thus matters went on; by degrees the Zährenburg, the entire estate, and the iron-works themselves, were mortgaged. The embarrassment for money that had always been an inheritance of the Zähringens ensued, but it assumed larger dimensions than before, since every one had been more willing to lend to the Oberforstmeister than to your father, whose ruin had been stayed for a short time by Herr Roland.

“Baron Waldemar, who was spending a year at one of the universities for the completion of his



studies, visiting meanwhile many large estates, and who had, in spite of his youth, a far more practical appreciation of business matters than his father, was just about to return home, where he might have been able to avert the utter ruin of his family, when the war broke out. The young fellow immediately entered the army, where he greatly distinguished himself," the old man said, with pride, "never leaving it until the war was at an end. But he bought at a high price the orders with which he was decorated, receiving in his last battle a wound which it was feared might be mortal, and which imperilled his life for a long time. He had scarcely been nursed in his own home for four weeks when his father died most unexpectedly, from an apoplectic stroke. The estate devolved by will upon Waldemar as the only child, burdened with the payment of a yearly rental to his mother, whose dowry was invested in it. Meanwhile, he was much too ill to superintend any arrangements. The severe wound in his head from the sabre of a French officer made all mental exertion impossible for the time, and he was therefore obliged to intrust everything to the former steward of the estate, and to an attorney who had been employed by the late Oberforstmeister in the many lawsuits that his unfortunate scheme had caused, and who procured for him, Heaven only knows how, the sums of money of which he had stood in ever increasing,

necessity. He was held to be a man of very little principle, and results showed that public opinion did not belie him.

“Baron Waldemar being thus prostrated by what seemed to be a mortal illness, his mother gave the necessary consent to arrangements of which she comprehended nothing. Mortgages were redeemed and replaced by others, notes were issued and renewed, and when the young heir began slowly to recover, it was no small task for him to evoke any order from the chaos of his affairs. He immediately perceived that his position was one to cause him great alarm, that only the strictest economy and untiring industry could keep his head above water. All his honest efforts, however, were rendered futile. Your grandfather, Herr Roland, had employed the time during which Waldemar was wrestling with death in obtaining exact information as to the state of the Zähringen family and of their money affairs. The attorney who had been so ready to procure money for the Oberforstmeister found that he could now drive a better bargain with Herr Roland. The steward, too, was bought over. Both are now wealthy men.

“You look at me incredulously, my dear young lady, but it was all very simple. The involved state of Waldemar’s affairs suddenly, one could scarcely tell how, became matter of public discussion; the most minute details concerning them became

known, and of course the evil reports were greatly exaggerated. Every one was glad to be rid of doubtful mortgages, and Herr Roland bought them all in at their full value, assisted by the treacherous lawyer, who did not disdain to lend his hand to such a scheme. As for the steward, he was at first very glad to have notes renewed which he had no means of redeeming, and readily closed his eyes to the fact that they were almost without exception all made to fall due upon one and the same day. The scoundrelly scheme never could have succeeded without the connivance of those two men. In one night Baron Waldemar became a beggar."

The young girl had listened breathlessly. He paused, and she clasped her hands in distress, saying, mournfully, "A beggar for *me*! Good heavens, how inexpressibly sad! Do you imagine, Doctor Jordan, that any blessing can rest upon a home obtained thus? that a heart conscious of what burdens mine now can ever be light?"

He gently stroked the hand that he took in his. "Most assuredly, my dear; if one has no cause for self-accusation; and if the unjust wealth be justly administered, a blessing lies in such a course."

"Justly administered in this case means returned," she said, hastily. "Oh, rid me of it, doctor; beg him to take back what is his own! You must feel in what a distressing position I am placed."

"How rash you are!" the old man said, shaking his head. "How thoughtless and hasty! But it is the way of the young. Do you fancy that Waldemar von Zähringen would accept an alms, and such an alms as the Zährenburg, from his mortal enemy?"

"Am I, then, his mortal enemy?" she cried, in dismay. "Why, I like him, I like him very much, and I only give back to him what is his own! He is young, he has had no time to become embittered as my grandfather was; he will not be so implacable, and continue his hatred to the end."

"Call it implacability or deeply-wounded pride, Fräulein Eva, if you will," the physician replied. "I think it impossible after what has happened that Baron Waldemar should receive anything at your hands. I have not yet finished. I would gladly have spared you, but all that I have said was only by way of introduction."

"I told you that if Waldemar had not been prostrated for so long by the wound in his head and its consequences his misfortunes would never have culminated as they did. It was a wicked deed to take advantage of his helplessness to ruin him. His injury had affected the nerves of his eyes so seriously that the specialist to whom he turned for advice declared the case a very grave one, and emphatically counselled great care, an entire avoidance of all mental agitation, and the greatest prudence as to any change of temperature."

"Suddenly the storm burst and almost overwhelmed him, victim as he was of so vile a plot. At first he refused to credit appearances. Frank, honest, and magnanimous by nature, he thought it impossible that a scheme could have been coldly devised for his ruin. But when your grandfather's name appeared upon every requisition he was puzzled, and suddenly his mother recalled who this Herr Roland, so long thought dead, really was.

"Then for the first time Waldemar learned how his family had sinned against you, and the knowledge filled him with shame and distress. However the old Baroness might try to smooth over the recital, he easily perceived what the truth was, and now clearly understood your grandfather's motives. Meanwhile, he tried to parry the blow aimed at him, by entering a suit against the steward and the attorney. The neighbouring nobility, averse to the disgraceful ruin of one of themselves, offered him large loans, but it was too late, the extreme limit allowed by the law was passed. Herr Roland paid a high price for the Zährenburg, but Waldemar was a beggar!"

Eva uttered a low cry, and buried her face in her hands, but she attempted no justification.

"You must not take it so to heart, my dear child," said Doctor Jordan. "It is past. The more courageously we look the inevitable in the face, the less it terrifies us."

"But he, Waldemar von Zähringen, how did he endure the blow?" she asked, almost inaudibly.

The old man looked at her in proud appreciation of his favourite. "Nobly," he replied; "because it was undeserved. All about him utterly condemned Herr Roland. He alone, conscious of the evil wrought by his family, attempted to palliate his conduct. His mind emerged from this struggle stronger, freer, and more unprejudiced than before, but his weakened physique did not keep pace with it. The frequent rush of blood to the brain had seriously increased the trouble with his eyes; he complained of seeing only as through a veil, and was often obliged to desist from all occupation.

"It was unfortunate both for him and for me that just at the time fixed by the law for the transfer of the Zährenburg I was obliged to go to a distant town to attend the funeral of my brother, and that the arrangement of his affairs detained me longer than I had anticipated. If I had been here, much would have been otherwise. But I departed after a promise extorted with some difficulty from Waldemar that in view of the physician's warning he would make an appeal to Herr Roland to allow him to prolong somewhat his stay at the Zährenburg.

"Nevertheless, when the time came for him to prefer his request all confidence failed him in the

magnanimity of the man who had worked his ruin in such cold blood; he could not bring himself to ask a favour of Herr Roland, and he found it easier and more suitable to apply directly to yourself, whom your grandfather had declared to be the real proprietor of the estate.

"In the midst of all the pain and anxiety caused him by his position, and still more by that of his mother, he yet took a certain satisfaction in the thought that you were the one to be benefited by the turn of affairs. His own noble and generous disposition made it impossible for him to conceive that a young heart, the heart of a woman, could, in the midst of the smiles of returning fortune, be led astray by a mean thirst for revenge."

"Of course, of course," she rejoined, eager for the end of the story; "but the answer,—what was the answer?"

"It came from your grandfather, but was written in your name. I cannot remember the exact words, but the sense was cruel, exasperating. Herr Roland began by a brief résumé, trenchantly expressed, of the unjust treatment inflicted upon his daughter, his granddaughter, and himself by the Von Zähringens, and then proceeded to express his surprise at the insolence of the request preferred, to which he curtly refused to accede, ending his note with the observation that of all beggars, begging relatives were the worst and the most importunate."

"Oh, my God, it cannot be true!" she cried, springing up and wringing her hands in distress. "He cannot have so disgraced me. Recall it all, Doctor Jordan; the words were gentler, kinder; it was Waldemar's morbid fancy that misconstrued them!"

"They were what I have told you," he replied, gravely shaking his gray head. "I have exaggerated nothing."

1512 In impatience of her misery she passed her hands over her face as if to wipe away the glowing blush that shame and humiliation had brought to her cheek. "I have suffered and endured much in my short life," she said, at last; "I feel disgraced to-day for the first time! But the humiliation is undeserved; I am innocent of that cruel reply. God forgive my grandfather for having employed my name to slake his thirst for revenge! I loved the old man so truly and gratefully," she continued, her lips quivering with emotion; "I looked upon him as a martyr to family honour and family pride, —now he has trailed his crown of glory in the dust!"

"I knew that you had no part in his conduct," the physician said, soothingly. "I knew it the very first time that I talked with you and looked into your frank, lovely face, and every day since I have been confirmed in that knowledge."

"I thank you for your faith in me," she said.



simply, pressing his hand; "but Baron Waldemar, have you convinced him too?"

Doctor Jordan shook his head sadly. "No, my dear Fräulein Eva, alas, no! We must have patience with him; he is ill and unhappy, and it is not true that misfortune always purifies and ennobles; it fosters every seed of suspicion and mistrust that may hitherto have lain concealed, and Waldemar rejects every hint on my part of the possibility of your innocence with regard to that reply. He insists that any such suggestion is the result of an unjustifiable prejudice of mine in your favour."

"Is this so?" she asked, with painful emotion; "nevertheless, you must help me to clear myself from blame; he must accept my explanation, must relieve me from the burden of a sin that I have not committed!"

The old man shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps he may in time; at present he is hardly accessible even for me."

For a while she was silent, lost in melancholy thought, and then she bethought herself that perhaps her grandfather's cruel reply might have had other consequences in addition to Waldemar's contempt for her. "You have not told me all yet," she said; "what did he do after receiving that terrible answer?"

"He followed the dictates of his mortally-wounded pride, and left the Zährenburg in an

hour. It was the most severe day of the year,—a cutting northeaster was driving the snow in dense masses through the valley,—but in his humiliation and indignation Waldemar withstood his mother's entreaties, and the advice of every one around him that he should wait until the next day. He refused to make use of the carriages and horses that he no longer called his own, and was driven to the railway station in a peasant's light cart, which afforded him no protection from the weather."

"Ah, how you grieve me! how you grieve me!" she said, struggling in vain to repress her tears; "but I must bear it,—there is no help for it. Let me know all. Where does he live, and what has become of him?"

Doctor Jordan hesitated, and not until the question was repeated did he answer, in a low tone, "He is blind!"

Then first Eva's self-control gave way entirely. She uttered a cry of anguish, and was for a while a prey to agitation so violent as greatly to distress the old man, accustomed as he was to see her suppress all display of strong emotion.

"Fräulein Eva, my dear child, you must not let this agitate you so; you really must not," he said. "No blame can attach either to you or to him; and no trial should be so impatiently endured. It is by no means certain that the excitement of that time and the inclemency of the weather were the only

causes of his disaster. There was danger of it beforehand."

A bitter smile trembled upon the girl's lips. "All the more care should have been taken to avert it," she replied. "Only twenty-eight years old,—so young, so good and gifted, and buried in darkness. Oh, my dear friend, help me to save him, or at least to mitigate his lot, or I never shall be able to endure my own. I am not selfish enough to care now for his contempt; it scarcely adds a feather's weight to my burden. I am thinking of him, and of him only!"

The old man gazed silently out of the window, where Eva's magnificent horses, curiously surveyed by a group of villagers, were impatiently pawing the ground. He thought of the high estimate placed by the world upon the lot that had fallen to the young heiress, and yet was forced to admit that she was but a poor, lonely child, upon whom the caprice of strangers had bestowed both poverty and splendour without ever giving her affection and peace.

"Have you nothing to say to me, nothing, my dear doctor?" she asked, after an anxious pause. "Is there no hope that his sight may be restored?"

"Oh, yes," he replied, with an accent of conviction; "but how, or when, it is impossible to predict. If we admit that intense agitation of mind caused the disaster, we may safely affirm that some

severe mental shock may restore his sight. At present what he needs is both bodily and mental repose, the rest of a peaceful, cheerful life, in which his nerves may recover their strength and tone, and this is unfortunately impossible in his case, living as he does with the old Baroness, without the intervention of some third person."

"Will you tell me all about him?" she said, earnestly. "Where did he go when that cruel letter drove him forth? How is he living now, and what is being done for him? Surely, surely, I may at least know this."

"My dear, good little girl," he said, much moved, "you certainly shall do so; there is perhaps no one in the world who so takes to heart Waldemar's fate as you do. I told you that I was absent when he left the castle or I might have prevented his rash departure. With the small means still left him he went directly to the capital, and thence to the little village where he now is, and where he knew that the cost of living would be very moderate. He had another reason, however, for his choice of this particular spot for a residence. Fräulein Ulla von Altenstein, to whom he is betrothed, lives in the vicinity, and it was a consolation, more indeed to the old Baroness than to himself, to feel that a friend was so near at hand."

"Ulla von Altenstein! I know her also," the

young girl said, with emotion, as a vivid blush coloured her pale cheek. "She was a beautiful child, merry and wayward, as I remember her."

The doctor smiled ironically. "Well, she is no longer especially merry, but she is as wayward as ever. She was betrothed to Baron Waldemar when she was little more than a child, and the pair were taught to play lovers until they learned the part. Whether they liked it or not is a point which my young friend never discussed with me. Youth only holds the key to such a confidence. To me they hardly seem suited to each other, but Waldemar would not admit this."

"Then he loves her?" the young girl asked, and her beautiful eyes shone brightly. "Then there is one ray, a ray from Heaven itself, to illumine his night."

The old man smiled benevolently. "Are you sure of that?" he asked. Then with sudden gravity he continued: "I cannot tell you whether it is love that binds him to her, or the grand sense of honour that, like an impregnable rock, forms the basis of his character."

"Fräulein von Altenstein was from her childhood regarded as the sole heiress of her grand-uncle, and Waldemar's father displayed an eagerness in furthering the announcement of the betrothal that was, to say the least, hardly in good taste. But before Waldemar entered the army, just at the time

when the financial affairs of the family were becoming involved and the prospect of a wealthy daughter-in-law was of the greatest importance to the Oberforstmeister, Fräulein Ulla's expectations came to naught, for her uncle married a young wife, who, before a year was over, presented him with a son.

"Every endeavour of the Oberforstmeister to break off the match was vain. Poor and helpless as Fräulein von Altenstein now was, nothing would induce Waldemar to desert her, even although he knew that her happiness would be purchased at the expense of his own."

"And now they belong to each other," Eva said, slowly; "she has the right to take care of him, to cheer him, and make the night light about him."

"She is not a star of the first magnitude," Doctor Jordan rejoined, dryly; "at best she is a sparkling meteor that flashes up brilliantly to disappear without a trace, and I am by no means sorry that the marriage has not yet taken place."

"But it will take place?" the girl said, inquiringly. "Surely it must delight Fräulein Ulla von Altenstein to share and brighten her lover's lot."

The old man laughed outright.

"Fräulein Ulla and a life of privation represent two entirely inharmonious ideas. You err, Fräulein Eva, after the fashion of all those who have been brought up in conventual seclusion; you judge

others by yourself, and because you have the disposition of an angel you credit everybody else with the like. Fräulein Ulla is a commonplace person, not of the very best kind. When Waldemar had the misfortune to lose his sight he released her from her engagement, and I make no doubt that she will take advantage of this release whenever opportunity may offer. If she were a good, sensible girl I would say to her, 'Go to him; your place is by his side; be the light of his eyes, the sun of his simple household, his treasure in adversity.' But as she is what she is, the hussy would cast a firebrand into his home. Pardon me," he continued, in answer to Eva's look of surprise and reproach; "if one wants to tell the absolute truth one cannot always be nice in the choice of language. Most certain it is that a life of poverty and self-denial would call forth her worst characteristics, and it is also a fact that Waldemar's pecuniary affairs require the greatest prudence and capability in their administration to enable him to live upon his pension and the hundred and fifty thalers of yearly income that was all that could be saved for the Baroness out of the wreck of their fortunes. His mother never possessed these qualities either; indeed, the best picture I could give you of Waldemar's present circumstances is to be found in a letter I received from the Baroness a few days ago."

The young girl, who still held the photograph in

her hand, looked up at him entreatingly. "Read it to me," she said; "surely you know that I am not Waldemar's enemy."

The physician was evidently convinced of that, for he went to his writing-table and took thence the letter in question. "It is really a very silly effusion," he said, "but while it portrays the mind, or the want of it, of the writer, it gives one a glimpse of the life she leads her son. Listen, then :

"MY DEAR DOCTOR,—I write you in perfect despair. The exertions, the sacrifices that I have made, transcend my powers of endurance. I am seriously ill,—confined to my chair by gouty symptoms. Think of my condition. Was there ever a woman whose life had been devoted to others so unfortunate as I? Do I deserve such a lot? Here we sit, my son and I, ill and helpless, struggling with the cares of an existence from which we were surely entitled to look for better things! If you knew how our days are passed,—in privation, discomfort, and mortal ennui! In addition, Waldemar daily grows more gloomy and reserved, and so irritable that I am even denied the poor consolation that it would afford me to discuss our affairs with him. I am not equal to the task of conducting our domestic affairs upon such insufficient means, from my invalid chair. I never thought to regulate my expenditure after the manner of the lower orders



I do not think of myself—you know my self-sacrificing disposition, how I can endure without a murmur; but Waldemar lacks the careful attendance that he should have, and some source of amusement. For I cannot be expected to be in any mood for cheerfulness; how should I, in this wretched village, without any society of my own rank? Truth to tell, we shall both succumb utterly if I am not shortly relieved from the terrible duties of my present position. You as a physician will understand and appreciate what is needed, and it will be easy for you in your profession to comply with my request.

“What I want is a kind of lay-sister, a strong, healthy, and withal not entirely uncultured person, who may be personally not distasteful to me, and who will understand the duties of both nurse and housekeeper. She must be thoroughly industrious and unpretending, with sufficient education to read aloud to my son, when she has leisure to do so,—since I am quite incapable of such a task,—of a cheerful disposition, and, if possible, not without a certain amount of talent. I should not demand hard manual labour of her. I am quite ready to keep a maid for such work. Her salary must in consequence and of necessity be small.

“It cannot be difficult, I think, for a physician to find such a person as I describe. You doubtless know of various institutions where such nurses are

trained. Pray do all that you can for me, and remember that I apply to you more in Waldemar's interest than in my own. I always think of myself last. Impress upon the young person, I beg of you, the necessity for humility and industry.

"Waldemar ridicules my idea, and, in the irritable spirit of contradiction that has characterized him since his misfortune, has forbidden me to ask your aid in what he is pleased to call an impossible project; but since his welfare is at stake, and not my own, I cannot obey him.

"Waldemar's condition is about the same. He is growing strong, and seldom has any pain. His eyes are clear and bright, but the look in them is vacant,—'vacant as his life' he sometimes says when I pity him. It is a greater deprivation for him than he is willing to admit that he has no piano. But he grows angry when I propose to buy one and to trust to some fortunate chance to pay for it, and I do not insist, for I am convinced that I should have to listen all day long to the most melancholy music. Now and then I read to him, but his choice of books is anything but entertaining. Newspapers and politics, books of travel, scientific works,—very rarely a novel. And his nervous sensitiveness is incredible! In spite of his blindness he perceives the smallest want of order, is annoyed by every speck of dust,—as if *I* could take upon myself the duties of a house-maid or

cook! He makes no complaint, it is true, but he silently leaves his dinner untouched when it is burned, as though it were my fault, and he gropes about with an air of resignation for anything of his that does not happen to be in its right place, as if one had nothing in the world to do but to lay things straight. And when all this does not irritate me he makes me very sad. How can the heart of a mother so tender and self-sacrificing as myself fail to be rung when I see him sometimes standing motionless at the open window, and when he replies, in answer to my question as to what keeps him there, 'I am drinking in the air from my old home, and listening to the call of the finches'?

"Oh, doctor, doctor, it has come to this,—that I am unequal to endure any longer the terrible life I lead. For God's sake send me some one to help me! You always had a special affection for Walde-mar. Remember that by fulfilling my request you will confer a blessing upon him. Sick as I am, and tortured by anxiety, I cannot possibly provide for his comfort, not to speak of affording him any entertainment. I ask nothing about affairs at the Zährenburg, although they cannot but interest me deeply. Your letters have convinced us that you do not sympathize with our feeling of profound and unutterable contempt for the creature who has worked so much misery in so cold-blooded a way. Only promise me that you will let me know when

Heaven's judgment overtakes her, as it must before long.

"And now, farewell. I am utterly exhausted, and can only beg you to believe me, with much esteem,

"Yours,

"FRANZISKA VON ZÄHRINGEN."

When Doctor Jordan had finished he glanced at Eva, who sat as if crushed, her hands folded in her lap.

"There,—now you have a perfect presentment of the noble Baroness and her self-sacrificing devotion to her son, with a sketchy, but still vivid description of Waldemar's delightful domestic life," he said, ironically. "Everything is lacking in his home that could make it endurable,—order, care, noiseless industry, every loving attention. This most admirable mother wants some one else to practise all the virtues of which she is incapable, and has actually become possessed with the idea that I can invent and furnish her with a being so wonderfully endowed that she will perform all these duties for the mere pleasure of doing so!"

A melancholy smile flitted over Eva's pale face as she replied, "Perhaps we may find some one, Doctor Jordan, some one who, although not very clever, can be prudent, careful, humble, patient, and most assuredly inspired by an intense desire to do well. I am so unhappy; not less so, I am sure,

than Waldemar and the Baroness. I certainly shall not neglect the only means for soothing their misery and my own. I shall go to them myself!"

If she had suddenly shown decided symptoms of insanity the doctor could not have been more startled. He sprang up and said, quite angrily, "Fräulein Eva, I supposed you to be a sensible, prudent young lady, but you are a mere enthusiast. This idea of yours is, forgive me, perfectly silly and impracticable. How will you introduce yourself there, and how will you be received? It is useless, as I told you before, to think of a reconciliation. You can expect nothing from them except profound, although unmerited, contempt and a humiliating repulse, for you are the last person in the world from whom Waldemar would receive an alms."

A blush of indignation flushed her lovely face as she rejoined, proudly, "And Eva von Zähringen would be the last person in the world to thrust herself upon them. Do you suppose I should appear before them under my own name? that I could be guilty of the indelicacy of still further increasing, by my known presence, the misery into which I have been the cause of his being plunged? Do you imagine I could have the insolent assurance to present myself before him in the full possession of my youth and strength and throw him the crumbs of what in justice is his and his only?"

"But how, then, can you marage it?" the old man asked, still rather harshly, but curious to know what her idea was.

"The plan is so clearly laid out in my own mind," she said, rising and going close to him, in increasing agitation, and with a deep-drawn sigh, "that it seems almost like an inspiration. It depends upon you alone to carry it out. Listen to me for a few minutes calmly, and with the fatherly kindness that makes me so happy and that gave me courage to come to you to discuss these matters. The Frau Baroness wishes to have about her a young girl who will faithfully, industriously, and unpretendingly take upon herself the cares of house-keeping and of such nursing as may be necessary. Do you think me unfitted for the performance of these duties? Do not smile sarcastically. You do not know what a hard school life has been to me. I was a forsaken child, passed from one charitable hand to another, early forced to learn to depend upon myself, and to trouble no one with the wants and wishes of childhood. I was only eighteen when I earned my own modest support under circumstances that could hardly be called favourable. Dependence, servitude, privation, were my familiar companions in my dreary path. I am a proficient in all that the Baroness requires. But I am not a proficient in what fate demands of me," she continued, with a passionate outburst. "I cannot en-

ture the torturing consciousness of injustice committed in my name, the fruits of which make me wretched. There is only one way in which to find, not happiness, but at least peace. Let me make what compensation can be made, and that in my own way. I have been dependent for so long upon the will of others,—let me enjoy for once only the sensation of independently acting out my true self!"

"And how am I to do this?" the doctor asked, greatly interested, and also much moved by the expression of pain upon the girlish face.

"You must help me. Heaven cannot frown upon so pious a fraud," she replied, earnestly. "You must introduce to the Baroness, not Eva von Zähringen, but a trained nurse, whose health requires that she should avoid the constant confinement of a sick-room, and who therefore gladly undertakes the duties of housekeeper besides. I had a great deal to do with the housekeeping at my old boarding-school," she went on, eagerly, "and since I have been at the Zährenburg I have learned still more, simply that I might have no unoccupied time. I shall easily perform all that is required of me, my will is so good, and I have only one request to prefer,—that I may bring with me my piano, for which I have no other place. Do not laugh. Yes, it is for his sake. You cannot tell how happy I should be if I could only shed one little ray of pleasure upon his life! Ah, my kind, my only friend, think what

a future you give me if you will but consent to help me, how rich you would suddenly make my lonely and aimless life! I am so selfish that I do not speak of him, but of myself. What am I to do in that proud old castle, with its endless suites of rooms, all as empty as my own heart? What am I to do with the time which I do not know how to spend? with wealth that does not enrich me? with the world of beauty that I cannot enjoy because I am so lonely, and burdened with the sin of another? Do you think it would not be delightful, a blessing, if, after a day of useful industry, I could read to Waldemar, or listen to his music, or if I could succeed in restoring to him some of the small luxuries, the habitual comforts of his former life? Do you think it impossible for me to satisfy the Baroness by constant patience and cheerfulness, so that harmony and order may again be restored in the household? Oh, my dear doctor, it rests with you to make Waldemar's life endurable and mine contented! I am only the steward of his property, for a share of my wealth is legally his. It rests with you to make it once more of service to him. So much can be done in this direction if you will but consent to help me. To you I commit myself. I have no father, and you no daughter, but suppose I were your child, your forsaken, grateful child, entreating peace at your hands, would you, could you, let me entreat in vain?"



She had taken his hands and pressed her glowing lips upon them. The old man, profoundly touched, withdrew them, and imprinted a fatherly kiss upon her forehead. "You have the disposition of an angel," he said, "and yet you are leading me into temptation."

"No, no!" she cried, with the earnestness of conviction; "it is your own shrinking, your adhesion to conventionalities, that is leading you into temptation. I am perfectly free and independent. I owe responsibility to no one except to God alone. Do you think he will condemn me?"

The old man shook his head.

"Then why should you try to prevent what God justifies and approves? Nobody can be to Waldemar what I can, for no one else has anything to atone for towards him. My will, my mind, my time, and my wealth all belong to him, to his service, until he is more content, more reconciled to life; until, perhaps,—I hardly dare to say it,—he is well again. And why would you restrain me? No one wants me, no affection and no duty hinder me. The silent, desolate Zährenburg is not the happy, loving home of which I once dreamed. Only warm human hearts can make such a home, and I am alone!"

He looked at her compassionately, and suddenly another thought seemed to take possession of his mind, for a light as of instant revelation passed

over his wrinkled features. He nodded his head as if reflecting, and said slowly, "We might try it; you could not bind either yourself or me by a trial, and it would show you at least that my heart is not quite such a fossil as to resist your enthusiasm. But there is so much to be taken into consideration, Fräulein Eva, and there are many precautionary measures to be devised; it is a plan that cannot possibly be carried out upon the instant. You cannot run away at a moment's warning from an estate like the Zährenburg without putting others in jeopardy. Arrangements must be made for your prolonged absence. You must consult with your lawyer, and some one must be legally empowered to act for you in any unforeseen contingency."

Her dark eyes beamed with delight, and, with childlike abandon, she threw herself into the old man's arms.

"I leave everything to you," she said, with a radiant smile; "you will find me obedient. Ah, how I have suffered to-day, and how you have cheered me! You make me rich indeed by giving me once more a share in existence."

"What awaits you is labour and care and vexation of spirit," he said, with a sigh; "you do not know the Baroness. But you would have it."

"It is all pure gain," she said. "I should else have spent my days in grief and useless pain. How

could I have any enjoyment of my possessions purchased at such a price? Would not his contempt crush me so long as it was justified by one sin of omission on my part? My course may be a strange one, and therefore I pursue it out of sight of the world, but it is not a wrong one. There is no other way to help Waldemar and restore him his own, spiritually and materially. I must not recoil from it because it is unusual."

"Still, it is only a trial," Doctor Jordan repeated, as if to answer his own objections. "So much has to be thought of; time alone can show not only how you can adjust yourself to circumstances, but also how Waldemar and the Baroness may be affected by your presence. It is not necessarily a lasting arrangement; it may be dissolved at any moment by mutual agreement as well as by accident."

"Or by a happy turn of affairs," she said, clinging to her hope with touching persistence. "Waldemar may recover his sight. You will help me cautiously and effectively to improve his circumstances. Fräulein Ulla will at last take the place that is hers of right. Oh, there are so many ways in which my presence may be made entirely superfluous!"

The physician smiled, greatly moved. "It never will be superfluous where it has once shed radiance and tenderness. But promise me quietly and thoughtfully to reconsider the step you wish

to take. It requires not only strength and endurance, but great caution likewise. Your own consciousness can teach you what would be the impression upon Waldemar should he ever learn who devotes her time and pains to him, to whom it is that he owes so much alleviation of his misery, so many little comforts."

"Do not be afraid. Who knows Eva von Zähringen, or takes any interest in her? I have lived in such solitude that in the small village of the distant province where Waldemar now is, no one even knows of my existence."

"And whoever did would never suppose you capable of this resolve," said Doctor Jordan, looking at her with kindly admiration as she offered him her hand in farewell. "Good-night, my child; you will sleep well, for you have a heaven within you."

She shook her head, but her eyes shone brightly. "Not yet,"—she tried to speak jestingly, in spite of her emotion,—“but I may win it. Give me for my own this little picture. It tells me so vividly how kind and merry he was, and how poorly he has been repaid. Oh, my dear, kind old friend, what would I not give for one seeing glance from those eyes!"

The old man lifted his hand with a smile full of warning. "Deserve heaven, do not storm it, Fräulein Eva."

A few minutes later her carriage bore her away to her lonely castle.

Waldemar's fate did indeed oppress her, as if with a crime in which she had part, but the atonement she had imposed upon herself gave a fresh impulse to her life. A hundred schemes and devices suggested themselves to her mind, and as the shades of evening gently enveloped the landscape in a misty veil, soothing fancies lulled her troubled soul to rest.

She drew forth the little picture, and looked into the laughing, boyish eyes that had once gazed so protectingly into her own.

"Not his rose-crowned queen,—the roses are faded," she said sorrowfully to herself,—“but his faithful, patient guide!”

## CHAPTER VI.

SHE had turned her back upon her splendour, and left her proud old castle, and lived again in a little garret room, beside the windows of which the swallows built and fragrant wall-flowers perfumed the air. Doctor Jordan had at first thought her conduct inspired by pure enthusiasm, but soon acknowledged it to be the result of a divine compassion. Eva never asked herself what actuated her, she obeyed an irresistible impulse from within that feared no struggle, no pains or labour, and that cheerfully resisted all temptation that would have deterred her. She not only entirely conquered by her persistent and passionate entreaties every objection that her old friend was again and again prompted to urge, there were also many obstacles overcome in the way of arranging matters so that her absence from home might be indefinitely prolonged; and, harder than all else, she turned away from intercourse with those around her of a kind which she had so long desired in vain, and which she now first found within her reach.

With her grandfather's death all obstacles in the way of her association with the neighbouring fami-

lies vanished. The young girl was no longer looked upon as his grandchild, having a share in his notoriety; she was now only the heiress of his wealth, and all were ready to yield to the charm of her beauty and gentleness, believing gladly all the good of her to which not only the pastor of the little village and Doctor Jordan, but also the poor throughout the surrounding country were eager to testify.

Under these circumstances it was held to be an agreeable duty to offer aid and protection to the solitary girl. Of course no two tasks can be more widely different than that of offering aid to a rich and beautiful heiress and that of affording it to a poor, desolate orphan.

A terrible fire, that laid nearly an entire parish in ashes, was the first occasion for introducing Eva to the society of the neighbourhood; two of its most distinguished members drove to the Zährenburg to call upon the heiress and make an appeal to her in the cause of charity.

In spite of her youth, and almost against her will, she was, in view of her great wealth and the time at her disposal, elected a member of the Relief Committee, and all the dowagers vied with one another in offering to matronize the lonely girl.

Thus she suddenly found herself surrounded by attention and kindness; she heard about her the gay laughter of youth, in which she joined, and was as refreshed by it as by blue skies and the song of

the larks. Hitherto she had not known that she was beautiful and lovely; she read it now in admiring smiles and sparkling eyes; and gratitude, not vanity, reciprocated the cordiality which she everywhere encountered, and that showed her the world in a new light.

Everything thus combined to keep her at the Zählenburg and to make it her home, but one image was incessantly present to her mind, more powerful to influence her than were all the pleasure and enjoyments that life offered her, all the difficulties and vexations in the way of her resolve. She always saw before her those eyes that once had smiled with such frank merriment and that no longer perceived the light of the sun. In the midst of the splendour of her surroundings she saw the poor little room where he pined away his days; and in the midst of the happy laughter about her her ear caught the mute sigh which was an accusation of herself!

Oh, yes, she was grateful for the human affection which had suddenly blossomed for her; she prized her beautiful Zählenburg and the poor hovels where she lavished her help and sympathy. But the one thought of Waldemar and his misery was omnipresent with her, ever inspiring the wish to requite to him all that fate and her grandfather's implacable hatred had taken from him.

Her preparations were made with restless eager-



ness. Doctor Jordan, once conquered, became her vigorous ally and assistant. Contracts with stewards and tenants were made out, a lawyer was associated with her paternal friend in the guardianship of her estates and factories, and then all the arrangements for her departure were made in the greatest secrecy. Eva announced to her new-made friends and acquaintances that she was about to devote some years to travel, in company with a family with whom she had been intimately associated as a child, and before they had the time for the due expression of either curiosity or sympathy she had vanished from among them.

Never, she thought, could she forget the impression made upon her by her first sight of Walde-mar, when, after a long and fatiguing journey, she reached the village and the little vine-wreathed cottage in which his dark, silent days were passing.

It was a summer afternoon flooded with golden sunshine and splendour, when, with a peasant lad as a guide, she noiselessly lifted the latch of the gate opening into the little garden. There was nothing attractive about it; the paths were rough, the little lawn before the house was a waste of trodden, dried grass, and the few flower-beds could boast of but a neglected bush here and there. Doors and windows of the one-storied cottage were closed, as if to shut out the greeting of the glorious day; the birds twittering in the branches of the

trees, and the gay butterflies hovering in the blue and quiet air, were the lords of this little, desolate spot, for he who should have been master here did not see them.

Eva's glance roaming over it all was arrested by what affected her profoundly and dimmed her eyes with tears.

Under a large linden-tree that shaded the house on one side sat a young man, his fine muscular figure motionless as if carved in stone, his pale face calm and impassive. The sunshine resting upon the leafy green above him slipped through it here and there, kissing the quiet dreamer's head and hands; the birds hopped familiarly upon the rustic table beside him, looking up at him fearlessly out of their shrewd little eyes. The life so near him lent him no animation.

For a moment it seemed to Eva that he must see her where she stood gazing with clasped hands, for his eyes met hers so perfectly. But there was no consciousness, no speculation in them; they gazed vacantly into space.

What was passing before his mental vision? Pictures of past happiness, of proud hopes in ruins, of flowers of affection now faded? Involuntarily her hand sought her heart; the anguish that throbbed there was sharper than that of him to whom fate had dealt such crushing blows, and who had done with hope.

A feeling of guilt oppressed her; a sense of shame, as though she were intruding upon some sanctuary; a doubt whether she were equal to her self-imposed task. Her grandfather's hatred had created a desert waste about Waldemar; did she possess the power to transform it into a new world, illumined by affectionate compassion, animated by intellectual sympathy, and guarded and watched over by unfailing and ever-waking care?

She made several timid steps in advance; her dress rustled against a bush, and slight as the noise was it aroused a huge mastiff that had been lying asleep at his master's feet. The splendid creature sprang up and began to bark, although it did not leave its post, but stood just in front of its master.

A look of expectation animated the young man's features; he seized the dog by the collar, and inclined his head towards the quarter whence the rustle came, as though waiting for some word in explanation or address.

Eva instantly comprehended this.

"Permit me to introduce myself, Herr Baron," she said, with a blush, as though the kindly falsehood could be read by him on her forehead. "I am Eva Wilding, the nurse or housekeeper whom you have engaged."

His face was lighted up by instant appreciation, and rising, he bowed courteously. "You are wel-

come," he said, with quiet gravity, "still more so to my mother than to me. After the distinguished recommendation of my old friend I am almost sorry to have you accept so sad and troublesome a position, and yet only distinguished qualities could fill and retain it. So contradictory is human nature that we always claim for the performance of the hardest and most thankless tasks the very noblest qualities, qualities deserving of the greatest good fortune."

"And yet," she rejoined, "this very claim bespeaks a generous confidence, and in the response to it may perhaps be found the good fortune you speak of."

There was something very sympathetic in the tones of her clear, ringing voice; he listened to it with evident pleasure.

"I am not much of a guide," he began again, without heeding her reply, and with a slightly bitter smile, "but if you will trust yourself to Glen he will bring us to my mother. Home, Glen!"

The dog, who had been steadily gazing at his master, turned and walked along the path towards the house, followed silently by the young people.

The bell at the front rang long and shrill, and a lazy maid-servant looked out of a side-door which was half obstructed by trailing, neglected branches of the vine that covered the house, and stared impudently at the stranger, the elegance of whose

figure was but enhanced by the simplicity and almost nun-like fashion of the dress she wore.

Waldemar stretched out his hand, groping for the door-handle. Eva forestalled him, opened the door, and entered the house, while he followed her. She paused on the threshold, however, as she hastily glanced around the apartment, and her eyes rested upon an elderly lady seated in an arm-chair, her feet resting upon a low stool, and covered with shawls and wraps, in spite of the summer weather. The young girl modestly awaited a sign to approach, and patiently endured the scrutiny to which she was subjected.

"Fräulein Wilding," Waldemar said, by way of introduction, "my mother, as you will easily see, stands in great need of your assistance."

The Baroness, without a word, sat gazing at the lovely young creature, probably searching her memory to discover where she had seen those features before.

"Yes, there is enough to do," she said at last. "You probably understand work?"

"I have been brought up to it," was the calm reply.

"Then you will make no pretensions to anything else, and that is as it should be, for I must tell you frankly that this is not the place where they would be permitted. Doctor Jordan, who recommends you, has doubtless given you a superficial idea of

the duties you are to undertake, but I think it best now in the beginning to make you acquainted with my special requirements."

The lady spoke with all the arrogance that had made her so unpopular in the days of her prosperity. She seemed entirely to have forgotten that the young girl standing modestly before her belonged to the class of voluntary nurses and assistants who demand no wages, and that Doctor Jordan had especially requested that she should be treated with consideration.

"In view of the degree of culture that I am told you possess, I have, at a great sacrifice, engaged a maid to do the coarser kinds of housework for you, but all responsibility will rest upon yourself. The kitchen and linen-room will be under your special superintendence. You will prepare the breakfasts and suppers, and, of course, arrange my room. The nursing of which I stand in so much need will be your duty, as well as the care of my wardrobe. And, more than all, you will be required to study my son's convenience and habits. Your leisure moments you will devote to the garden, that has been sadly neglected, and to a general supervision of the household. Pray remember to spare me the discussion of those trifling domestic matters any interest in which is so foreign to my nature and so injurious to my health."

Waldemar stood near the window and listened.

The enumeration of all these duties and cares seemed to him endless. It would require a strong physique and perfect health to undertake such a daily round, and for the first time he tried to form some idea of the exterior of this girl who had offered her services so unselfishly.

"There is a chamber above that you can occupy," the Baroness began again, after a short pause. "It is, in fact, the room I had reserved for my future daughter-in-law upon her occasional visits to us. When she comes——"

"I shall of course instantly resign it to her, madame," the young girl rejoined, with winning cordiality.

The lady nodded rather more graciously. "You can take an immediate survey of the kitchen and cellar; the maid-servant will inform you as to the division of our day and our domestic customs, and of course I shall look to you for the speedy reform of many abuses, and for the greatest prudence and industry. My social position has not been such as to familiarize me with the petty details of house-keeping, and although the scandalous rascality of some wretched parvenus has robbed us of our means, it could not take away from us our aristocratic habits and self-consciousness."

The girl's face grew paler, and her large eyes turned their startled gaze towards Waldemar, who was standing leaning against the window-frame.

"Go, now, and establish yourself in your room," the Baroness began again. "And one thing more,—it was what I especially wished to say,—a piano has arrived here, and I understand you wish to have it remain. I trust that compliance with this extremely unusual request will not result in your desiring to practise continually. In the first place,—and this is the most important consideration,—it would interfere with your duties; and, secondly, I cannot endure any music save the best."

"I shall certainly not annoy you, madame, or neglect my duties," Eva assured the lady. "I now see that the request was unjustifiable. My only excuse is that I was unwilling to sell the instrument, and hoped some out-of-the-way corner might be found for it here."

"You were mistaken, however," the lady replied; "I was obliged to have it placed in our own apartments, in the little room between this one and my son's, and you——"

"Have certainly afforded me several pleasant hours," Waldemar hastily interrupted his mother. "I tried the instrument; I could not refrain from doing so. I hope I have not annoyed you?"

The girl's dark eyes sparkled at the success of her little scheme. "On the contrary, Herr Baron, I thank you for so kindly soothing my distress at having committed a misdemeanour upon my first admission to the household. If Madame the



Baroness has no further commands for me, I will now retire to explore my new domain."

The Baroness assented by a nod, and the mother and son were left alone.

"Well, what do you say? what do you think of her?" the lady asked, so soon as the door was closed behind Eva. "The first impression is apt to be correct."

Again the slight frown appeared upon her son's brow, giving the grave face an almost gloomy expression. "The eye alone," he replied, curtly, "can decide a first impression."

"Good heavens, how hard it is to live with you!" said the lady. "As the blind are always stumbling against some one, so those who see are always running afoul of them. I did not mean to hurt you, Waldemar."

He waved his hand in a slight gesture of impatience, and she continued: "How were you pleased with what she said?"

"All that she said was intelligent and modest," he replied, "and her voice is one of the sweetest I ever heard. I am glad, for I am very sensitive to a fine voice, doubly so since my sense of hearing has to stand me so much in stead."

"Yes, it is very fortunate," the Baroness assented. "She can read to you when she has nothing else to do. Your taste in books is so odd that we seldom agree."

"Dear mother," the young man rejoined, with

gentle gravity, "in the first place, she is here, not for my amusement, but to be a help to you, and then I certainly ought not to destroy with my odd taste the pleasure of the few hours of leisure that you mention."

"How exaggeratedly considerate you are!" the Baroness objected. "Persons such as this girl have no leisure hours in your sense of the words. Of course it is a great privilege for one in her station to have a position in our family. I am sure I cannot imagine what more she could possibly desire in the way of entertainment or recreation."

"Oh, mother," the young man rejoined, impatiently, "so much more! I, to whom it is denied, well know how much. Is there no delight in a ramble through field and forest, gazing into the clear blue of the skies, watching the clouds float across them, following the birds in their flight, or plunging into the cool, green depths of the woods, with such beauty on every hand as fills the heart to overflowing? And even if these pleasures did not exist, surely you will admit that there are other enjoyments beyond daily intercourse with two invalids. There is her correspondence with her friends, music, a favourite book."

"Why not add balls, soirées, and picnics?" the old lady rejoined, in a tone of irritation, as she rearranged her cushions. "No, Waldemar, no; there is no use in trying to convince me. People

of that class have neither a special right nor a special inclination to enjoy themselves; they are designed by nature to serve others, to sacrifice themselves, and I, for my part, do not presume to interfere with or to complain of the Divine arrangement of the universe. All must comply with the requirements of their nature, at least in our circumstances, and mine demand comfort."

He was filled with mingled vexation and compassion, but the latter conquered, for he reflected that she was old, that she was deprived of so much that she had once considered as necessary to existence, and that her life with a blind man was terribly monotonous and dull. He groped his way to her chair, and, bending over her, he laid his hand on her head and said, tenderly, "Poor mother! and there was so little comfort that I could give you. You suffer constantly. Let us hope that with this sister of mercy an angel of goodness has entered our home."

"Yes, yes, my dear Waldemar, but no sentimentality, I pray," she replied, pressing his hand. "I never can endure it, and please let me have my own way with the angel of goodness. The chief thing is to put her to the most intelligent use."

Waldemar's sympathies received a sudden check; his compassion for his mother faded. "Do with her as you like," he said, coldly, standing erect. "I have no occasion for her services; on the contrary,

I do not desire her presence, for I need nothing that she can supply."

In this conversation Eva's sphere of activity in the household seemed to be clearly defined, and the girl adapted herself to it with wonderful facility.

Quiet and thoughtful by nature, early trained to be self-reliant, and constantly keeping a certain goal in view, she did not succumb to the agitations of the first days in her new home. Gradually she established herself upon a firm footing, becoming familiar with the customs and needs of the household, and complying with them cheerfully.

There was plenty to do, for the Baroness was exacting and capricious, and Eva would have had little time to devote to Waldemar even if he had not studiously avoided her. At first she never saw him except at the noonday and evening meals, when he was grave and taciturn; still, if he did chance to address her his voice always took a kindly tone.

Although he could not see, he felt that his life was gaining a new aspect beneath her touch; he divined that his surroundings were more attractive, and if there was no note of joy, no gay laughter in the quiet cottage, the Baroness's complaints were at least stilled, and from the small room adjoining Waldemar's the music of a piano was often heard.

He never complained, but the Baroness had been right; in those melancholy chords there sometimes

sounded so passionate a longing for youth and freedom, that the girl without, labouring and devising for him, would now and then bury her face for a moment in her hands and cry bitterly. But this was only a passing weakness; she would immediately remember that she had come to aid him, not to mourn with him, and would redouble her zeal in his behalf.

A degree of order and regularity, an amount of comfort gradually appeared in the little household, greater, perhaps, than it had known in the days of its prosperity. Whatever Eva touched she embellished.

She did her best not only to impart cheerfulness to Waldemar's mood, but also to add grace and beauty to the cottage. The hitherto neglected vine was trimmed and trained so that it made a charming frame-work for doors and windows, now opened to admit air and sunshine. The tiny lawn was watered and the beds were stocked with brilliant flowers. An awning shaded Waldemar's window from the sun, for she had observed that his eyes were sensitive to too bright a glare, and in the rear of the cottage a tent was erected, and the ground beneath it covered with light mats, where, on very fine days, the breakfast- and supper-table was spread.

"Where does it all come from?" Waldemar asked in surprise, when he heard of the improve-

ments and perceived the increase of comfort. "I trust, Fräulein Eva, you remember how very moderate are our means."

"There is no debt incurred," she assured him. "Everything is paid for in ready money as you desired."

"Do you understand, mother," he asked the Baroness, when they were alone, "how we can live so differently? how we can have so many little delicacies for the table, so many domestic comforts, with the same straitened means?"

"No," she replied; "but it is not my affair. Eva is here precisely that she may relieve me of all such cares. We must have been very badly served formerly; but I beg you, Waldemar, not to be too lavish of praise, or you will spoil all."

By and by, when she had established perfect method in her government, Eva had more time, or rather she procured it for herself with her own abundant means. The less the Baroness desired to know how the household affairs were conducted, the easier it was for Eva to arrange them with comfort and even luxury, and to intrust to other hands much of the labour that had used up her time. She never reflected whether her pious fraud in this respect were the result of her own desire or of the honest wish to aid Waldemar, but she knew that no labour was so easy and pleasant as that undertaken for his special benefit.

Thus she slowly gained a firm footing with both mother and son, and Waldemar gradually thawed in his conduct towards her; her gentle presence grew to be a necessity to him. He never suffered an arrogant or unkind word to be spoken to her in his presence, ready as the Baroness was to vent upon her the peevishness of her changeful mood. He could not see her, but he could everywhere trace her watchful care. The pure fresh air of his room, the fragrant flowers at his window, his comfortable seat under the linden, with his favourite pipe laid upon the table near his hand, all, all came from her.

And the leisure came of which the Baroness had spoken; two hours of every day were devoted to reading aloud to him. She read with interest and intelligence. He taught her many things, and there was an interchange of ideas and opinions that was like sunshine to his intellectual night.

"How sympathetic your voice is!" he said once. "When I cease to hear it everything seems to me to grow not only more silent but darker."

His words sent genuine warmth to her very soul. None since her mother's lips had been closed in death had so delighted her. At first he had avoided her, and then had simply endured her presence as being unavoidable; now he sought her society with the dependence of a spoiled child. He would follow her light step, go in search of her when she was busy in the house or garden, and would often,

as he had rarely been used to do, sit in his mother's room when Eva was engaged about her, thereby often preventing a querulous outbreak of ill humour on the part of the Baroness.

Several times she consented to play to him, but his skill was far greater than her own, and she begged him not to ask this duty of her.

"But you are surely able to sing?" he inquired one evening, when the Baroness was absorbed in her novel and he had been playing divinely.

"Only very little," she replied. "My voice is untrained; I have had no good teacher, have learned but little, and have practised still less."

"But you have the voice of an angel; every tone is music. Try; sing me a simple song."

She did so without hesitation. What request of his would she have hesitated to fulfil? Her voice was full and rich, and the little song touched him to the heart. When she had finished, he sat with his face shaded with his hand, as if unwilling to let her see how it had moved him, and then suddenly, as if remembering that he owed her some thanks, he raised his head and said,—

"Do not regret moving me as you have done. The little song says truly,—

"Is the golden daylight fled?  
Are its glowing tints declining?  
Do not mourn, for overhead  
Through the night the stars are shining."



He repeated the lines in an undertone, but with intense feeling, and for the first time since she had been beneath his roof took her hand and pressed it to his lips. Not with the tenderness or the passionate devotion that a man pays to his love; it was a mute but eloquent expression of gratitude from a heart that after a long sojourn in silence hears its own language spoken once more, and of reverence for the dignity of the feminine character which each day more clearly revealed to him.

Far removed as the act was from love, Eva was thrilled by it as her hand lay in his, and the memory of this moment was vivid in her mind when, after a busy, laborious day, she retired to her little room.

She stood at the window looking out upon the dim garden that had become a small Eden beneath her care, and above which a profound peace brooded. The crickets were chirping in the calm summer night, and a bird twittered sleepily in a tree close by. She thought of how often she had gazed abroad thus, how, after the burden and heat of many a day, when she had borne in silence the unkindness and caprice of others, the sacred calm of night had been balm to her tired heart. How earnestly she had longed for a home and for loving hearts about her, and how short-lived had been her happiness! Now she was alone again, and the old pain lay heavy at her heart. A weary longing took

possession of her; she could not define it in words; she scarcely comprehended it. For the world she would not have left her present abode. She blamed herself for folly. She would be resolutely happy, and banish a mood that was surely a dangerous companion on the thorny path she had chosen to pursue.

She leaned out of the window to drink in the delicious night air, when through the silence came floating upward in soft, low notes the sound of a familiar voice singing the concluding lines of her song,—

“Do not mourn, for overhead  
Through the night the stars are shining.”

She listened motionless, until suddenly, in clear appreciation of all within her that had heretofore been vague and indistinct, she looked up to the starry skies and prayed softly and fervently, “Ah, that I might be the star of his night!”

## CHAPTER VII

THERE is no ground for the complaint that time seems to stand still in a methodical, monotonous existence. The days that are all alike in their occupations, their duties, and their small pleasures, agitated by no special event, interrupted by no change, mingle in our memory in a single image in which the measure of their duration seems shortened, while startling occurrences and changes, even various diversions in rapid succession, bring into play such manifold thoughts and feelings, that in looking back upon them they seem to have consumed an enormous amount of time.

For Eva the weeks and months of her new life fled like magic, each day bringing with it the pleasurable consciousness that she was attaining her end. Waldemar gained strength physically and intellectually beneath her influence. He was comfortably conscious of the improvement in every arrangement of the household. In her society he found entertainment and appreciation, and he resigned himself willingly to the novel charm of domestic life that cast its spell about him.

The morning was cool. The autumn mists were

still struggling with the sunshine when Eva left her room earlier than usual to begin her day's work. An observant eye would have discovered that in spite of the early hour there was a festal air about the cottage and the quiet garden. Busy hands had carefully raked the paths on the previous evening, the beds were freshly weeded, and behind the shining windows, enwreathed in the climbing vines, were snowy curtains.

Before the young girl went below-stairs she visited the apartment she had destined for Waldemar's betrothed, refusing to occupy it herself, and cast about her a satisfied but scrutinizing glance. It was simply but most attractively arranged. Clear muslin curtains draped the windows, and the mirror of the small toilet-table, a pretty paper covered the walls, and a bright-coloured rug beside the snowy bed, and brilliant cushions on the lounge, made the little room gay. It was ready for its fair occupant; for her sake the cottage and garden shone in festal array. Fräulein Ulla was to come by the morning train.

There were several hours yet to pass before the young lady could arrive, but a strange unrest had banished sleep from Eva's eyes, a mixture of unselfish joy and of jealous pain that another had the right to do more than herself for Waldemar. She looked about the little room, straightened here and there upon the walls a few pictures that she had

taken from her own chamber, arranged some books that she had selected from Waldemar's store, and put fresh flowers in a little vase on the toilet-table.

When she went below she found that she had lingered longer than she had intended, for the servant-maid was awaiting her in the kitchen. Eva prepared the Baroness's coffee, which that lady took in her own room, fearing the freshness of the early autumn air, and then arranged the breakfast-table for Waldemar and herself beneath the awning at the back of the cottage.

The sun had dispelled the mists; its rays shone bright and warm upon the spot; and the robin-redbreasts, daily fed by the blind man, fluttered impatiently about the girl, who to-day paid them no heed. As she arranged the dainty table, for the first time she reflected upon its pleasant cosy air, and upon how delightfully this morning hour alone with Waldemar, and occupied for him solely, had been passed by her. To-day another would take her place, rendering him all the little services which Eva had been so pleased to fulfil, and bestowing upon him a delight that she could not give. She had wished for this day, had in a certain fashion prepared for it, and yet, now that it had come, she doubted whether she had the strength to endure it.

Waldemar's step in the hall put a stop to these painful thoughts; she stroked and patted the beautiful hound, who came towards her for his

morning caress, and cheerfully returned the "good-morning" with which Waldemar greeted her.

"I know you are there," he called gayly: "first, because Glen is making such a noise; and, secondly, because you never fail to be where you are wanted."

"Say rather where I belong," she replied; "and yet I should scarcely like to think how often I have not been there."

"Never when there was anything for you to do," he insisted, eagerly.

Meanwhile, she had filled his cup and placed his chair as he liked it. He sank into it with a sigh of comfort, while she stood by the table.

He instantly perceived this. "Why do you not sit down?" he asked. "Have I overslept myself like a sluggard, and have you already breakfasted?"

"Yes, Herr Baron; not because you were late, however, but because Fräulein Ulla will probably take my place in a few minutes; the train must arrive very shortly."

There was no lighting up of his face, nothing but what seemed to be an expression of sudden remembrance. "Yes, Ulla," he said, "my good Ulla, who is coming so amiably to give me pleasure! She will be very grateful to you for the care you have bestowed upon my mother and myself, and very much pleased with the transformation you have effected in what was but a sorry household. I am constantly

conscious of how delightful it would be to see it all."

"Your fancy probably paints it in too glowing colours, Herr Baron, and you certainly put far too high a value upon my efforts, which are but those of the calling I have chosen," she replied.

"It is a divine calling," he exclaimed with warmth; "and I confess with shame that I cannot understand such self-sacrifice. For an individual to whom we are bound, whether by love, friendship, or gratitude,—oh, yes! But for humanity at large, I am most certainly wanting in that all-embracing charity which is the best part of our divine inheritance."

She blushed as if detected in a fraud. Was not her devotion to the individual? and if the desire to atone for the sin of another had brought her hither, was she not kept here by a far more powerful feeling?

As she did not reply, but, as he could hear, lighted a match for the cigar that was always ready for him at this time, he took it from her, and went on: "I have to thank you too for the pains and taste with which you have arranged Ulla's room. My mother, when I was with her for a moment yesterday, after she had inspected it, described it to me with actual delight, and she is, as is apt to be the case with those of her age who are sick and unfortunate, not easily satisfied. Unfortunately, I

can be no judge of your taste; I know only of your unwearied pains; but Ulla has much sense of beauty. Indeed, it is a necessity for one constituted as she is to bask in the sunshine of life. She was bitterly sensible of the discomfort of her first visit to us, and my impatience often made our hearts sore enough."

Eva was silent, and he went on with an air of provoking merriment: "I should like to see your look of grave disapproval upon hearing this my confession, but it is the truth; there is no use in denying it. Now, to be sure, I consider myself a greatly improved character. One does not venture to be irritable when you are by, and if formerly Ulla had more reason to be so than I had, you have kindly destroyed any such reason."

At this moment the dog began to bark; a girlish figure came round from the front of the cottage, a clear voice called Waldemar by name, and he sprang up and extended his arms with a joyful exclamation. "My dear Ulla!" he said, with some emotion, as he threw his arm around her and stroked her rosy cheek. "My dear Ulla, how good of you to come!"

"My dear Waldemar," she said, gayly mimicking him, "how bad of you to rumple my smooth hair! Please let me go."

Her words touched him where he was most sensitive; he released her instantly, and said in an



entirely different tone of voice, "Consider my clumsiness as the inevitable awkwardness of a blind man, Ulla, and forgive me."

"Oh, 'tis not so bad as all that," she replied; "I only wanted to provide against future offences. But how well you look, Waldemar, and what an idyllic scene this is!" she went on, gazing about her. "It is most refreshing after my tiresome ride!"

Eva had modestly stood aloof, although near enough to hear what was said. This was not the lovers' meeting that she had fancied to herself; a meeting to which the misfortunes and helplessness of one of the pair would, she thought, lend a peculiar intensity.

From Ulla's words and manner no one would have supposed that she had been parted more than a day from her lover. There was no hint of the feeling that finds sure expression, even although in mute eloquence. She had all the florid, plump beauty of which there had been the promise in the child, more dazzling in its colour and freshness than in its form or expression.

As her last words were evidence of her need of refreshment, Eva approached, and Waldemar, who had forgotten her presence for a moment, hastened to present her.

"Fräulein Wilding, our faithful nurse and dear companion," he said, cordially.

"A kind house-sprite, then; in German, house-

keeper," Fräulein Ulla said, not unkindly. "A most blessed arrangement, Waldemar; I cannot tell you how I suffered upon my last visit from the want of good servants, and really I could not see what was to be done."

His face showed his painful embarrassment,—all the more confusing because he could not read in Eva's face how Fräulein Ulla's expressions affected her.

"Since Fräulein Eva has taken the reins of government from my mother's hands, and superintends everything herself, we are much better served," he rejoined. "She shows her skill in this as in everything else."

Fortunately, he could not see the prolonged stare bestowed by Fräulein Ulla upon the housekeeper. Eva's lovely features retained the repose that made them so attractive; she was neither sensitive nor embarrassed.

When she had relieved the young lady of her travelling wraps and poured out a cup of coffee for her, she withdrew to acquaint the Baroness with the visitor's arrival and to attend to her daily duties.

She seemed to herself to have lost the ground she had won with so much pains. As she ordered and arranged everything with redoubled diligence that nothing might provoke Ulla's harsh criticism, she was depressed, not by the thought of the lowly position she had chosen to fill, but by the conscior-

ness that she was still but a stranger here, having no share in Waldemar's inner life, no part in the plans and resolves of the family.

She saw but little of the betrothed pair, for as the day grew more sultry they adjourned to the Baroness's apartment, whence Ulla's gay laughter came floating out through the open window. It was quite natural that she should cheer and enliven him; a certain gay humour which Eva lacked gave her the power to present a most refreshing contrast to the hard lot that had fallen to him, and made it seem less gloomy. They had memories in common, and together formed plans for the future; they had been brought up in the same social sphere, and had voluntarily united their destinies. At Ulla's touch chords resounded which Eva could not strike, and depths of his soul which she only divined were laid bare to his betrothed. Ulla was so fresh and spring-like; she sparkled with gayety and a thirst for life's enjoyments. And he knew how beautiful she was; he had seen the golden curls that he now touched with a light caress; he had gazed into the eyes that could shoot such wayward glances and yet that had known how to enslave him.

Eva forgot her wealth and all that it offered her. She asked for none of this world's enjoyments, so she thought, if she might but remain here as she was for all time. And yet this could not be. She

had already effected so glad a change in Waldemar's life, the last, best gift of all should not be lacking.

The little servant-maid, transformed by Eva's care and generosity from a slatternly imp to a respectable maid, waited upon the table, which was more daintily served in honour of the guest than ever before, and Eva appeared only at dessert. Fräulein Ulla received her with a rather haughty stare of surprise as she took her place at the lower end of the table, and even Waldemar had but a word now and then for her. His attention was given naturally to his gay betrothed, and the Baroness, confirmed in her aristocratic self-consciousness by the presence of her future daughter-in-law, spoke very coldly and briefly to Eva when she desired any service of her, whilst Fräulein Ulla did not address a single remark to her.

After dinner, while the Baroness retired to her bedroom for her siesta, Waldemar, on Ulla's arm, strolled through the garden behind the cottage, and Eva, whose gaze followed them from the window, noted how tender was his manner to her. Once or twice as they paused Ulla would lean her head familiarly upon his shoulder, and he would lightly pass his hand over her curls and press a kiss upon her fair forehead.

A strange pang thrilled the watcher. She suddenly seemed to see with startling distinctness that

she was utterly alone in the world; that only her self-imposed service here gave her a temporary claim upon Waldemar and the right to a home beneath his roof. She turned away as if she had done wrong in beholding Ulla's happiness. But the remembrance of the little scene that she had witnessed pursued her everywhere: it interrupted her work. In the midst of her duties she would fall into a reverie, her hands idly clasped before her. A sense of weariness oppressed her, such weariness as she had never known before. She longed to go—where, and for what?

She started when the Baroness's bell rang,—the signal that her afternoon nap was ended,—and the young girl endured with mute composure the sharp and impatient reproof administered to her for neglecting to awaken the invalid a few moments sooner.

Coffee was served under the linden, and as Ulla sat beside Waldemar on the very spot where Eva had first seen him, a silent, motionless figure, she could not help contrasting that moment with the present. Not only did his mind seem to have attained infinitely greater vigour and freshness, his form was more erect, his voice was fuller and richer, and every movement of his frame showed renewed strength and elasticity. In the eagerness of her present scrutiny she overlooked the fact that this change had developed slowly, day by day, as a

fading flower will revive to life and bloom, beneath the refreshing influence of sunshine and rain. Now for the first time she observed the result. Hitherto she had not thought of making comparisons, and she ascribed it all to Ulla, to the omnipotent power of love.

When they had drunk their coffee the Baroness allowed herself the pleasure, so long denied her in her melancholy seclusion, of a drive. The village that had hitherto been able to furnish only shabby vehicles on occasions of funerals and weddings had lately, to the astonishment of the inhabitants, come into possession of a luxurious landau, which could be hired at a ridiculously low rate.

Neither of the ladies extended an invitation to Eva to join them. Waldemar alone remembered her. His delicate sense of hearing missed her light step. He turned, and called her by name. "You are going with us?" he asked, anxiously, when Eva hastened to his side.

There was a defiant, antagonistic look in Ulla's eyes as she forestalled Eva's reply by saying, hastily, "You are so careful of us, my dear Waldemar; but indeed we are not so spoiled as you think. On this short drive we really shall have no need of a maid; and I should like to have my trunk unpacked."

There was no bitterness in Eva's heart, only sorrow. She saw clearly that this girl would never

allow her the least share in Waldemar's life, if they ever stood side by side, the one to be beloved by him, the other to serve him. The vague, indefinite ideas that she had cherished of a reconciliation between them to be effected by Ulla vanished utterly.

"Thank you for your kindness, Herr Baron," she said; "but even if my duties did not detain me here, I should beg you to leave me behind. I will see that Fräulein Ulla's wish is complied with."

"You will do it yourself?" Fräulein Ulla asked in a tone that implied a command.

"I will see that it is done," the young girl calmly replied.

A dark cloud gathered upon Waldemar's face; and between his eyebrows appeared the wrinkle which Eva knew so well to be an indication of a struggle to overcome an unpleasant sensation. He hurriedly offered her his hand before following his betrothed, and the next moment the carriage was out of sight.

She looked after it with an aching heart; the beautiful Ulla's veil had fluttered in the distance like a flag of victory as she sat opposite her lover, and doubtless her gay laughter soon banished the cloud from his brow.

Eva slowly returned to the spot where she was wont to sit, where she usually read aloud to him and conversed with him, and where lately, at her

suggestion, he had begun to dictate to her as his amanuensis his experience of the war. Now all this seemed to her forgotten of right as if it were unjustifiable. Surely she had far transcended the bounds she had set for herself. She had meant to minister to his material welfare when she came hither, and with the aid of her wealth she had contrived all the little illusions that had made his daily life so much more comfortable; but then she had involuntarily demanded a share in his mental existence, and had stretched out her hand towards his heart!

Was it for her to occupy the place that seemed to her the most desirable on earth? Was it not Ulla's pleasure, and more than that, was it not her duty to be to him what this stranger, led hither by a desire to atone for a sin committed by one of her kin, had tried to be? A veil seemed suddenly withdrawn from her eyes, and before her lay clearly defined the path she ought to pursue. She must remove all the obstacles that lay in the way of Waldemar's marriage,—obstacles which seemed to be solely of a pecuniary nature; she must devise means to provide him with a home the hearth of which no care should haunt, and which should render unnecessary all the little wiles and illusions that now scattered roses in his pathway.

Waldemar himself had, as she had perceived a hundred times by hints and open declarations, no



other feeling towards the mistress of the Zählenburg than contempt and an invincible dislike—a dislike which would be an insurmountable barrier to all approach on her part. But Ulla's feminine nature would prove more placable; it would be easier for her to sacrifice her pride to her affection. Ulla would be more accessible, and would at least listen to her.

Like a flash of lightning this thought illumined the darkness and uncertainty of her mind, and she yielded to it as to the dictates of conscience, as she returned hurriedly to the cottage. She gave the little servant-maid the necessary directions for fulfilling Fräulein Ulla's behest, and then took refuge in the silence and solitude of her own room, the only place where she could resign herself entirely to meditation and self-examination.

It could have been no fancied impulse to which she now yielded as she seated herself immediately to write. Every word of this letter must have been clearly before her mind's eye, for she wrote without pause, and scarcely took the time to read over what she had written before she sealed and addressed it to Fräulein Ulla von Hartenstein.

With far more deliberation she began a second letter. It was now for her to defend what she had just done, and to subject her ebullition of feeling to the test of friendly judgment.

"My dear fatherly friend," she wrote, "you must

not withdraw your support from me and think me ungrateful because in yielding to an irresistible impulse I act without your advice and approval. Ulla von Hartenstein is here, and since I have seen her with Waldemar I know that his life, in spite of all the freedom from care that I could give it, would be utterly incomplete without the crowning blessing of affection which Ulla alone can bestow.

“His prolonged separations from her, the obstacles to a union which would endow his mournful, monotonous life with *all* the best and dearest interests of human existence, weigh upon him, believe me, most heavily. Pecuniary considerations alone prevent his marriage, and I must at least make an attempt to set these aside.

“I am afraid of your opposition, for you cannot be impartial in this matter, since you are not quite friendly to Ulla; but Waldemar loves her; I see that, and it decides me. Do not call me an enthusiast or a fool; it hurts me so to have you blame me. There is no happiness for me; not because I have adopted any lofty idea of self-renunciation, oh, no; I am but an ordinary exacting mortal. But I do not think I understand what happiness is, or perhaps it has been within my grasp and I have failed to seize it.

“Happiness comes unsought to the elect, like a ray from heaven, but any one surely may find

peace in this world ; therefore let me seek peace. I know that I shall feel a soothing satisfaction if I can restore to Waldemar, as far as lies in my power, what my grandfather's cruel revenge took from him. The greater part of the loss I can never make good ; the vanished years, the refreshing sunlight, I cannot restore to him. But what wealth can give shall be his, and he shall not take it from my helping hand, which he rejects so scornfully ; no, the cup of joy shall be offered him by the one whom he loves best in the world.

"I have written frankly to Fräulein Ulla. I have told her how troubled and unhappy I have been in knowing that my grandfather ruined Waldemar's life and with it her hopes for a happy future, and I have begged her to be kind, and to relieve me of the burden of guilt which I have now borne so long for another.

"I possess wealth, the extent and importance of which you have often told me I do not appreciate. You have helped me to employ it profitably, and I am daily grateful to you in the knowledge that the poor are aided, widows and orphans comforted, and labourers employed. You have made plans for me of school-houses and hospitals. You will not, oh, no, you cannot try to prevent me from consoling my own heart, from relieving it of the burden which has oppressed it for so long !

"I have tried to impress upon Fräulein Ulla that

she personally is a sufferer by my grandfather's cruel acts, since Waldemar's ruin indefinitely postponed the marriage to which she had looked to give her a happy home. Ulla von Hartenstein has a moral right to at least so much of my property as will insure her the independence which was lost to her by the postponement of her marriage, and I have entreated her to relieve me of my distressing burden by a compromise, in view of which she is to accept as an indemnification the estate in Thuringia, which my grandfather purchased last autumn. I know that its revenues are considerable, and I remember that it is charmingly situated. If she consents, if she kindly and generously receives from my hands the talisman that will rejoice her and absolve me; if I can see life blossom afresh for Waldemar in the delights of home; if his health should so improve with happiness regained and freedom from care that he may once more see the beautiful world about him, then, my dear old friend, my father, I will come home to you, again to forget and to be forgotten.

"It has been a dream, this episode of my life. At first it was delightful, but now it begins to distress me, and I long to escape from it. My position, satisfactory though it seem to me, cannot be enduring, for I fill a place that does not belong to me, and I discharge the duty which is of right another's, and that other one who can bestow far

more than I. To-day, for the first time, I see this clearly, and the knowledge comes to me like an attack of homesickness. I long for you, for my beautiful Zährenburg, for I know not what.

"I pray you to send the enclosed letter to Fräulein Ulla for me, as I wish her to continue to believe that I am still travelling. I might indeed present my request to her in person, but I cannot summon courage sufficient to confess to her the deceit I have practised in gaining an entrance to this house under an assumed name.

"This deceit must be ended, for the sake of all of us.

"All the questions and propositions in your last letter I will discuss in my next. To-day my time is limited, for the Baroness and the happy pair will shortly return from their drive in the new landau. It came a few days ago, and is just what I wanted. Thank you very much for the pains you have so kindly taken in sending it.

"Waldemar continues to improve. Of myself there is nothing to say. You know without my telling you that I am always yours, gratefully and affectionately.

"EVA VON ZÄHRINGEN."

## CHAPTER VIII.

As the smooth surface of a lake will ripple, and describe widening circles long after a stone has been thrown into it, so the quiet uniformity in which Waldemar's life was passed was long disturbed by Ulla's appearance at the cottage. It was not only that the regular routine of each day's occupations was interrupted, but her varying moods, her sudden whims, and a certain wayward disregard on her part for the sensitiveness resulting from the state of health of her betrothed, and which she called weakness, all combined to disturb the smooth surface of the social life at the cottage.

She was a great belle in aristocratic circles, where she led a life of dependence in the house of a connection of her mother's, and would undoubtedly have had many suitors had she not been entirely without dowry. Her relation to Waldemar imposed but little restraint upon her in the world in which she moved. At least no one believed the tie between them to be indissoluble. She wore her airy chain very lightly, and society was incredulous as to the genuineness of the magnanimous affection which so well became the betrothed of an

unfortunate and blind lover. Fräulein Ulla was perfectly well aware that she lost nothing and risked nothing by her present position, which did not bind her, and in which, if the worst came to the worst, there was always a chance for the better. She preserved, at least in Waldemar's mind, her character for disinterested affection. There was but small hope of his recovery, but still there was some, and if he were to regain his sight there was in store for the young man, whose misfortunes had excited universal sympathy, a future which, although less brilliant than had formerly been anticipated, was at least more attractive than life as a single woman dependent upon rich relatives could possibly be.

Thus the tie between the pair was of dubious strength and of more than dubious value.

Waldemar's sentiments towards her he had subjected years before to a most conscientious examination, and he had then acknowledged to himself that they were those of cordial friendship, but in no wise of love. When however he became thus aware of their nature Ulla was no longer the envied heiress, but the dependent orphan, and not for worlds would Waldemar have undeceived her. Shielded by his care and affection, the fresh young flower braved without injury the tempest that would else have withered and destroyed it.

Thus the tie between them remained unsevered,

and Waldemar was not unhappy, since no other love had found a place in his heart. He had the friendliest feelings for the companion of his youth in spite of her faults, and a life by her side was far from distasteful to him. But in the course of time clouds gathered upon his horizon and the tempest broke above his head. The battles fought in France, in one of which Waldemar was dangerously wounded, were as a first flash of lightning in Ulla's clear skies. It was not the last. Close upon the long, weary, and sometimes almost hopeless illness of her lover followed the total material ruin of the family, prostrating in the dust the young girl's proud hopes.

She had no genuine warmth or depth of nature. Wealth and happiness were synonymous with her, and the certainty that she should have to share a very modest lot with Waldemar, that he must struggle to earn a subsistence, was almost more difficult of endurance to her than had been her fear for his life.

She could not clearly picture to herself a life of labour and small economies; she shuddered at the idea of daily self-sacrifices, of her early bloom fading in seclusion; and the choice was difficult indeed between entire dependence upon wealthy unloved relatives and a needy but independent existence as Waldemar's wife.

For a while she was spared the necessity of a



choice. His blindness postponed all idea of work or of marriage, and condemned him to a passive state of endurance that increased his misery ten-fold.

He was drifting towards a dark, hopeless future, and he now did all that he could to dissolve the engagement that bound Ulla to him. She was young, beautiful, and gay, why should the waters of life not bear her on their surface to pleasant shores, instead of engulfing her with himself and his misery?

To his astonishment he here met with obstinate and most unexpected resistance on her part. The magnitude of his misfortune, the universal sympathy accorded him, which made him for a while a centre of interest in aristocratic circles, not only provoked an impulse of magnanimity in Ulla's mind, but impressed her capricious nature with a sense of importance, while at the same time it gratified her vanity to be admired for a display of heroism. Thoughtlessly swayed by the mood of the moment, she doubtless was self-deceived when she committed herself to a decision, the entire significance of which she overlooked, since it entailed upon her no immediate self-sacrifice. She allowed herself to be lulled by a beguiling hope that something unforeseen would occur to turn everything to her advantage.

But nearly two years had now passed, and there was no change in Waldemar's condition, except that

gradually the calm of resignation was taking possession of his high-strung nature,—he no longer uttered a complaint. He grew taciturn and reserved, and Ulla, who had never understood him, thought him reconciled to his lot, and was glad not to have to exert herself to console him.

She had long since plunged again into the vortex of society, while he suffered in silence. It was far more natural to her to do so than to mourn over lost hopes; and if her dependence upon her haughty and unsympathetic relatives had not now and then depressed her buoyant frivolity she would have been quite content. The troth that she had plighted to the companion of her youth did not prevent her from receiving the homage of others, and an entire year had passed, during which the desire to see her betrothed had succumbed entirely to the craving for variety and pleasure, which found its food in the home of her rich relatives. Her remembrance of the first short visit she had paid the Baroness, of the more than modest surroundings, the daily discomfort of the life which the melancholy mood of the blind man made sadder yet, was too vivid to allow of any desire to repeat it. Her thirst for enjoyment found matter far more attractive in the attentions of a handsome young officer, who wanted nothing in her eyes to make a wife happy save the due amount of the goods of this world.

Perhaps it was a suspicion of this that influenced

her relatives to urge her to pay another visit to the home of her betrothed, in hopes that she might there come clearly to understand the state of her feelings, and weigh the engagement of years against the allurements of the moment. The girl scarcely followed the promptings of her own heart when she announced her visit to the quiet, vine-wreathed cottage where Waldemar's existence passed so silently that at times she forgot it entirely.

To her joy she found everything here much changed, to outward appearance. Although there was but little luxury reigning in the cottage, there was on all hands observable a certain delicacy and refinement of exquisite neatness, as well as of methodical arrangement. The walls were hung with charming water-colour sketches that Eva had produced from her portfolio, tasteful rugs modestly replaced the Persian carpets upon which the Baroness had been wont to tread, and flowers of rare beauty from the garden were daily arranged in the rooms. The loveliest ornament in the pleasant household was, indeed, Eva herself, as she presided over her small kingdom, and sometimes the eyes of the society belle would follow her in admiring surprise.

All her arrangements were convenient and suitable. Everything was ordered with the tenderest regard for Waldemar's condition, and the punctual and noiseless service rendered, the delicately-spread

table might have beguiled Fräulein Ulla to dream that she was surrounded by competence.

This change in exterior circumstances did, indeed, as Waldemar had foreseen, remove any immediate cause for Ulla's discontent; but, nevertheless, little misunderstandings constantly arose. His life, so largely now that of the intellect, required a deeper appreciation, a more refined apprehension than Ulla possessed; and although Eva could succeed in making him oblivious of his infirmity for hours at a time, he was never more sensible of it than in the presence of his betrothed. He was then sometimes so possessed by a certain discomfort as to deprive him of his amiability, and the thought of passing his life with her—such a life, helpless, and dependent upon her care—would have been torture to him had it not been so distant a possibility.

Pleasanter hours, however, would ensue after these differences of opinion and times of discord that were proofs of the uncongeniality of the natures of the betrothed couple, and Eva knew only of these pleasanter hours. It escaped her anxious scrutiny that all the gayety was evident in Ulla alone; that her remarks and observations were but little fitted to strengthen the unfortunate man in resignation to his fate; that they were far more suited to arouse in him an eager thirst for the foaming billows of life that bore freedom and hap-

piness on their crests. As she went to and fro in her silent ministrations, Eva heard only Ulla's ripple of low laughter, her gay sallies that now and then brought a smile to Waldemar's lips, as they sat together, his arm about her waist.

Eva was so inexperienced; she had known only the loneliness of life, surely what she saw here must be happiness. She seldom joined the family circle, and no one seemed to miss her. Ulla's presence increased her household cares. The Baroness, who seemed rejuvenated by the visit of her future daughter-in-law, needed scarcely any attendance, and Waldemar now accepted all the little services she had been wont to render him at the hands of his betrothed.

It was but rarely that he addressed Eva if she happened to be present, but whenever he did so his voice had a tender, kindly tone, and what he said showed that in spite of apparent neglect he was conscious of her services with that delicacy of appreciation peculiar to the blind.

Her acts he could apprehend, but not her thoughts. He could not look into the beautiful eyes that had now such a far-away, dreamy look in their thoughtful depths. He could not see how firmly set were now the lips that could smile so graciously.

An indescribable restlessness impelled her hither and thither when she reflected that the decisive

moment was at hand; that Ulla might now receive at any hour the letter that was to be sent to her.

Suppose her gift were not accepted, and that everything remained as it was before she came,—the old suffering and the old delight!

The days passed slowly and wearily. She suddenly experienced all of which the good old doctor had tried to warn her: all the danger and singularity of her position. She grew dizzy with the vertigo that seizes the somnambulist whom an imprudent shout awakes on the brink of an abyss.

At last the tension of her expectation was relieved; two days before Ulla's departure the important letter arrived. A cry of delight resounded through the house, penetrating to Eva's little chamber, and telling the breathless listener there of her victory, a victory that crowned her not with laurels, but with thorns!

Her emotion detained her from joining the family circle for a while, but she could not prevent single words and exclamations, called forth by Ulla's lively demonstrations, from reaching her ears; they were by no means exclamations of delight; that first joyful cry had been the only one. Ulla was defending her opinion, feebly supported by the Baroness, against one that was evidently adverse. There was a vehement discussion angrily conducted by Ulla, engaged in by Waldemar with

suppressed indignation, and at last ended by a passionate outburst of tears from his betrothed.

Eva stood motionless. Her work had been rendered vain at the last moment. Instead of liberating the lovers from the galling weight of solitude and daily care, her bold step had only awakened memories of humiliation endured, and Waldemar's wounded feeling had ruthlessly broken down the barriers erected by time and self-control. Thus much was clear to Eva: Ulla wished to accept the offered happiness, but her lover forbade her to do so. What was to have united them had, on the contrary, served to separate them.

A monosyllabic evening followed the agitating scene; the Baroness was depressed and Ulla offended; it was natural for Eva to retire to her own room. And the following day, too, the last of Ulla's visit, she held herself aloof, but when the lovers returned from a long walk all appeared to be harmony and peace between them. Ulla was gay again, and Waldemar was more gentle and forbearing than ever in his manner to her.

The parting took place without any apparent emotion. Perhaps both felt, in spite of their outward accord, a certain relief in their separation after such stormy scenes.

Profound silence now reigned in the cottage. It seemed as though Ulla alone had informed it with gaiety, and the old pleasant intercourse would not

return to it. The Baron was a prey to an odd kind of embarrassment. It was as if he wished to atone for some sin against Eva, and her evident avoidance of him strengthened him in this feeling. He listened in vain for her light step as he sat alone beneath the linden where formerly the hours had passed so swiftly in her society.

The sun's rays kissed the lonely man's dark curls, and the air was soft and warm as in summer. But the leaves were gently dropping from the trees. If he caught them as they fell he could feel that they were withered. Yes, it was autumn. Eva had come in the spring, when the trees were bright with blossoms. Waldemar smiled thoughtfully, and threw away the leaf with which he had been playing. He did not need its witness to add to that of his own heart that it was autumn.

The piano was his consolation. He played all the evening, and the wild, sweet chords touched Eva's very soul as she sat bending over her work. But the Baroness sighed impatiently.

"It is very bad for the nerves, it is a positive weakness, always to improvise so, instead of playing good music by acknowledged masters."

Eva cast at her a glance of entreaty. "But the heart expresses itself more truly in its own tongue," she said.

"And so does caprice," the old lady replied, sharply. "This time it speaks the language of



obstinacy, which condemns him to useless sacrifices, and imposes them upon others."

The Baroness retired early; she missed Ulla's superficial chatter, and was evidently in an ill humour.

When Eva, who conducted her to her room, returned to the little drawing-room for a book she had forgotten, Waldemar stopped playing, and arose from the piano.

"Is it late? is it time to go to bed?" he asked, appearing in the doorway.

"It is past ten o'clock, Herr Baron, and madame has retired."

"Why do you not bid me good-night, Fräulein Eva?" he asked, impulsively. "You know that I cannot sleep when you fail to do so; I am not accustomed to be treated as though I were a useless burden."

"Herr Baron!" she stammered, startled, "you surely would not accuse me of so cruel a thought! I did not venture to disturb your music, and never dreamed that you would notice whether or not I expressed in words the wish that most certainly arises every evening in my heart for you."

There was a slight confusion evident in his face on hearing the sad tone of her voice.

"Then forgive me," he said, more quietly; "but I so like to *hear* your good-night. One who has lost as much as I have does not willingly spare the

slightest pleasure to which he thinks he can lay claim."

He held out his hand, and she placed her own in it. "Good-night, Herr Baron; God grant you calm repose and a glad awakening."

He remained motionless upon the threshold until the sound of her step had died away, and then, with a long sigh, sought his own room.

## CHAPTER IX.

THE following days passed with blue skies and cloudless sunshine; only now and then a wayward breeze would, as in play, flutter the leaves from the trees, and they would float silently to the ground. The sun shone so warm and bright that some of the late blossoms were beguiled into opening their hearts to its ray, only to perish shortly in the frosts of night.

It was a quiet Sunday morning. The bells in the little village church sent their clear tones ringing through the air above the cottage gardens gay with autumnal foliage and vocal with the twittering of birds of passage flying southward.

There had been a stormy scene between mother and son in Waldemar's room on the previous evening, for Frau von Zähringen had gone to bed in tears, and Eva suspected self-reproachfully that her letter to Fräulein Ulla was still the cause of strife between them. Now the Baroness had gone to church; she had requested her son to accompany her a part of the road thither, and Eva remained behind alone.

The young girl had finished her morning tasks; she was seated leaning against the trunk of the

linden, listening to the village bells and gazing after the flying birds of passage. They were soaring away so gladly, and yet they had built their nests here and warbled their songs of love. Why could not she go too as gladly, she whom no tie bound to this spot? Why must it seem so hard to her to leave a house in which she was a stranger, and people who cared nothing for her?

The mute answer suddenly appeared in her blushing cheeks, as Waldemar's huge dog burst open the low gate, preceding his master, who followed him with an assured step along the broad gravelled garden-path.

"Ah, here you are!" he said, almost out of breath with his rapid walk, and hearing the rustle of her dress. His handsome face was instinct with a certain suppressed emotion. "I hope I do not disturb you. It is not, I know, the time when, spoiled by your kindness, I am apt to think I have a claim upon your companionship, and yet I should so like to stay."

"You do not disturb me, Herr Baron," she replied kindly, pushing towards him a more comfortable chair than the one for which he was groping; "and, besides, it is Sunday."

Her perfect unselfishness was evident in the reply. She never thought of her right to a day of rest, but only that there was no work to be interrupted.

"And for that very reason perhaps, I ought not to stay here," he said. "Are you not busy with some favourite occupation for which you have no time on other days,—reading, writing, or drawing? I know from my mother that you are an artist."

"I am doing nothing whatever, Herr Baron," she said, embarrassed by the consciousness that, although he could not see her, he was trying to read her soul.

"Nothing?" he asked, in surprise and half regretfully; "nothing at all? Have you voluntarily imitated what I am forced to do? Of course, there is a difference: those who see are always doing something; if they but look around them, every glance must arouse some thought, some emotion, some dream."

"But dreams are as dangerous as will-o'-the-wisps; we soon find ourselves upon treacherous ground if we follow them, and I should gladly be disturbed in their pursuit," she replied.

"Were you dreaming, then?" he asked, gravely. "I would not have believed it, Fräulein Eva. I cannot call up any picture of your material form in my imagination, and I do not choose that any one else should describe you to me, but the mental image of you, which each day stamps more deeply upon my soul, wears a gentle, but perfectly clear, thoughtful, decided expression, not at all dreamy."

"But to-day I do not at all resemble your flattering image of me," she said, lightly.

He thought her words indicated a desire to be alone, and arose. "Then let me go," he said, seriously, "for I had a communication to make to you for which I crave your entire sympathy and your entire comprehension."

His words thrilled her as with an electric shock.

"No, stay, I entreat," she cried, eagerly. "Are there none save happy dreams that visit mortals, and may it not sometimes be well to be awakened from them?"

He took his seat opposite to her again, and said, as he traced the gravel at his feet with the end of his cane, "A great change has taken place in my life. You have from a most amiable inmate of my home grown to be so kind and true a friend to me that I wish to acquaint you with it before it is known to others who have been faithful to me in my misfortunes."

Her cheeks had grown a little pale. "I hope it is a happy change," she said, as he paused.

"If you call freedom from a grievous error happy, yes," he replied, his head proudly erect. "Since last evening my engagement to Fräulein von Hartenstein has been broken and I am free."

"Good heavens!" the girl cried, in mortal terror at learning the effect produced by her interference. "It cannot be. So much cannot be demanded of

one human heart. You have borne so much, overcome so much, you must surely be victorious over misunderstandings or mistakes that would dissolve a tie that has been proved so strong in misfortune."

"Dissolve?" he repeated, with bitter emphasis. "I did not use that word; I said broken. Would you have the engagement continued at the cost of Ulla's honour? and have I ever told you that it was love that formed it? We were destined for each other from childhood. When I grew to learn the true meaning of life, Ulla was already thrown upon me for protection; the link that bound me to her was forged by honour, not by love. Knowing this, I would have restored her her freedom when I became blind; and when she, God knows wherefore, refused to accept it, I considered myself alone as bound. I should have held her in high honour if she, honestly understanding herself, had left me to a fate which she could neither share nor soften, but as it is she even robs me of a kindly memory of her."

Eva sat as if stunned, and wrung her hands in mute anguish; she had meant to lead him up to sunny heights, she had instead plunged him in a hopeless abyss. She did not dare to question him; every word that he could say would rise up to accuse her in whom he was placing such magnanimous confidence.

"I owe it to myself to give you my reasons for such harsh words of her," he continued, after a pause. "I desire least of all to appear in your eyes as a thankless fellow who cannot appreciate the magnanimous affection that falls to his share.

"I must beg you to listen while I tell you something of myself, and thereby expose to you the severest wound that has ever been inflicted upon my sense of honour,—a wound which should surely have been remembered by her whose hand was to guide me through a life the struggles and trials of which I have not yet learned to face successfully. You know my story; every one knew it; and although I have always avoided alluding in your presence to the melancholy experiences which continually pain and distress me, my mother—I know her too well—has certainly not spared you her tears and complaints. She has doubtless told you how I looked forward to a life of comfort and happiness, and how I was robbed of it by a scoundrel in a single night. I know the refrain; but what my mother did not tell you is that my parents provoked this evil by gross injustice on their part. My mother obstinately refuses to see in my terrible fate the retribution of avenging justice, but in my long, long hours of enforced idleness I have pondered much on this domestic drama, and see in its final act far more than the mean revenge of a miserable scoundrel. He was an unhappy old man,"



he continued, "originally a noble character, but unfitted to contend with misfortune, since when he lost all that makes life worth having, when he was a bankrupt in faith and affection, he flung away all belief in human nature. He has worked me much woe, but God knows I am no unjust, no implacable opponent; I have pitied him far more than I have condemned him, and I have never forgotten that he was irritated to madness. I can understand how such a character should select the scene of his humiliation for the scene of his triumphant success; and although no other kindly thought may hover above his grave, I sincerely wish that the earth may lie lightly upon him."

Eva listened to his words as to some decree of mercy; the light of happiness, love, gratitude, and admiration illumined her charming face, and as she had tried to atone for the fault of another as though it had been her own, so she now blissfully accepted these generous words as a gift to herself. Walde-mar did not see the tears that rose to her eyes, but he heard the deep breath of relief that escaped her breast.

"You sigh, Fräulein Eva; does my story weary you?"

"No, oh, no!" she replied, with some emotion. "I was thinking of the old man who, after suffering so much, threw away so precious a jewel, and whom you have forgiven so magnanimously. He cannot

thank you, let me do it in his stead ; it is so divine to forgive !" She leaned forward, and lightly touched his arm ; he took the small hand extended to him and carried it reverently and almost tenderly to his lips.

"I should be dishonest to accept your thanks," he said, as he released it, "for I do not deserve them. I am prompt to forgive those only with whom I am angry, never those whom I despise. It was not Herr Roland who inflicted upon me the bitterest humiliation of my life. The insult to the conquered and mortally wounded opponent, who was after all an innocent victim of his revenge, was not offered by a man, but by a woman ! Forgive me," he said, hastily, as a low exclamation of distress reached his ear,—*"forgive me. I would not wound you in your sex, thank God. Eva von Zähringen is an exception.*

"At the time when I lost everything,—lost it to her, the victor in the strife, I was not only mentally depressed by the misfortunes which had swept over me like a tornado, I was physically exhausted by protracted illness, and by the labour and anxiety that had preceded the final catastrophe. Then first, as if to warn me, I began to suffer with my eyes. I was of course desirous, in consideration of all the circumstances, to vacate the Zährenburg immediately upon its passing into my cousin's possession, but in my suffering condition, and in the midst of a very

inclement winter, there was danger in my immediate removal. Therefore I yielded to the prayers and tears of my mother, who saw her last earthly joy imperilled in me, and to the earnest admonition of my physician, and appealed to the young lady to grant me a few days of delay.

"I did it without any misgivings, for I asked so little. She had not yet taken possession in person of the Zährenburg—she might be sure that I should avoid all intrusion upon her,—and then, besides, I confess that I took a genuine interest in the young girl against whom my relatives had sinned so heavily. I fancied her a lovely and gentle creature, kind of heart, since she was no stranger to misfortune; and if in my ruin there were any consolation for me, it was to be found in reflecting that my fall placed her at least where she belonged.

"I can hardly bring myself to tell you of the reply that I received, since whenever I recall it the wound that it inflicted is poisoned afresh. It was so cowardly and base, that to this day I regret having weakly yielded to the entreaties of others and to the promptings of my own fancy. Fräulein von Zähringen haughtily and harshly refused my request, and closed her reply by declaring that of all beggars poor relatives were the most importunate, the most incorrigible, and the worst!"

A long pause ensued,—the happy light in the young girl's eyes was extinguished, and she gazed

in sorrow and dismay at the man seated opposite to her, who was evidently endeavouring to suppress the indignant emotion aroused in his mind by the memory of those cruel words. She saw his lips quiver, and she longed to cry out, "It was a lie,—a lie! Am I not here to serve you, to love you?" but her courage failed her; and if it had not, what would have been the result?

"She called me a beggar," he said, slowly, with set teeth, in a strangely altered voice, "an importunate, incorrigible beggar of a relative,—such as hang on the skirts of rich heiresses,—one of those adventurers who wear out the patience of their families,—a man without shame, without pride, without honour, who instantly forgets old enmity in hopes of living at ease. All this from a tender girl to a crushed man who simply entreated her to grant him a few more nights beneath the roof of his fathers!"

"She never did it: she never did it!" the poor child sobbed, forgetting herself; "trust me, who speak in the name of all womankind. It cannot be. Some one has abused her name, and the memory of the desolation of her childhood would surely be sweet to her compared with the idea of having such revenge and brutality attributed to her."

He uttered a low, bitter laugh, and there was a contemptuous ring in it such as Eva had never

heard from him before. “‘Thou too, Brutus!’” he said, shaking his head. “It is strange, and particularly sad for me that it is just the noblest and best of my friends who try to excuse Fräulein von Zähringen. Doctor Jordan emulates you in this vain attempt. You talk of an abuse of the young lady’s name; let me tell you that this precious letter was written by her grandfather, but signed by her own hand. The signature was firm and clear; as distinct as the insult to which it set the seal.”

Eva grew pale, pale as one of the late white roses which he had just unconsciously broken off with the cane with which he was playing. She suddenly understood it all; she had at that time, at her grandfather’s desire, signed so many papers, so many contracts and deeds of purchase, and among them, doubtless, this letter, in utter ignorance of its contents. This seemed to postpone indefinitely all hope of self-justification; nevertheless she attempted it.

“They say Fräulein von Zähringen was brought up in dependence. Obedience was probably one of the first duties inculcated by her benefactors. Perhaps—no—certainly she never knew of the insult to which she affixed her signature. She innocently trusted the embittered old man who was her sole protector upon earth.”

He laughed again in the way that so pained her. “How zealous you are, and what odd conjectures

you hazard! You would metamorphose her from a serpent into a goose. Unfortunately, this does not accord with the lady's reputation for intelligence and energy. They say she even succeeded in partly taming old Roland, with all his savagery. I have a great respect, nay, reverence for you, Fräulein Eva. I beg you do not disturb it. Her vindication from your lips pains me. When sympathy, family-feeling, and the fervent desire to see the misdeeds of those belonging to me atoned for by fate idealized my image of Eva von Zähringen, I did not take into consideration that her grandfather's savage, revengeful blood runs in her veins; that the traits that led him to a wild life of adventure would impel a woman to base deeds, and no eloquence, not even yours, can suffice to soften my intense aversion for her."

He could not see her; regardless of his presence, she buried her face in her hands in despair.

"You are silent," he said, when he had grown calmer, "and I thank you. Doctor Jordan, who took upon himself the astonishing part of the lady's advocate, has also fallen silent since he has found his efforts fruitless and that I see in them only an indifference to myself and to the disgrace inflicted upon me. He prizes the old, tried friendship more highly than that which is new and but questionable."

There were lines of ineffable sadness about her

mouth as she wondered who could resolutely continue to be her advocate, who would not fail her if the choice lay between Waldemar and herself.

"Where so faithful and wise a friend has failed I can do nothing," she said, submissively. "Fräulein von Zähringen must intrust her cause to the hands of God."

"That certainly would have been better than to intrust it, as she has done, to Ulla's hands," he said, contemptuously. "Not content with her skill in downright brutality, Fräulein von Zähringen has now tried her hand at intrigue. Fortunately, she is clumsy enough about it to admit of its being readily seen through. In spite of her wealth, and of, as I hear, a rare degree of personal beauty, Fräulein von Zähringen has as yet not been received into those circles to which she belongs by birth and position; the notorious circumstances attending her acquisition of the Zährenburg have utterly isolated her. Now, a lady who has purchased wealth and rank at the price she paid for them is naturally very unwilling to relinquish the worldly advantages that should belong to her; to resign splendour and recognition and lead the life of a hermit. Apparently she thought a reconciliation with me necessary to accredit her with those who have held aloof from her on my account. I cannot else understand how she can have duped good old Doctor Jordan into faith in her desire for a reconciliation, which is sought

much too late, and the motive for which I despise. There are matters which can neither be believed in nor atoned for, and if happier results had attended her social efforts she would have taken no pains to appear better than she really is. Since her grandfather's death, I suppose, the desire for society and perhaps for a suitable marriage has asserted itself more strongly in her mind; for, after finding that my opinion and estimate of her were not to be shaken, she has appealed to Ulla.

"You have seen Fräulein von Hartenstein; your observation is too refined, your judgment too keen, not to have discovered the failings and weaknesses so patent in her character; and you must also have seen clearly how ill fitted Ulla is for the hard lot that was all I could offer her, and how worthless in her eyes any pleasure must be that life with me could bestow upon her. Well, Fräulein von Zähringen longed to brighten this lot," he continued, with bitter irony, "and my betrothed seconded her efforts. The lady maintains, in a well-turned epistle, the sentiment of which would be convincing if it were genuine, that Ulla's freedom and independence have been terribly injured by Herr Roland's conduct towards me and the results ensuing therefrom. She entreats Ulla to relieve her from the oppressive burden of this consciousness, and begs her acceptance of an estate in the country which will secure her a future life of comfort. You see



Fräulein von Zähringen is at once prudent and bold. Hundreds of women would not have dared thus to approach the betrothed of a man who had received so mortal an insult at their hands. It is uncertain whether Fräulein von Zähringen really appreciated the extraordinary nature of her appeal to Ulla, but the Serpent in Paradise did not offer the tempting fruit with eloquence more beguiling than that used by my cousin, and the first woman did not take it more greedily than Ulla.

"If ever I was thoroughly convinced of the entire incompatibility of our views and sentiments, it was when my betrothed would have so humiliated me as to accept a gift from that hand, and to yield the victory to my mortal foe, giving her the right to talk of a 'begging relative.'

"I therefore represented to Ulla that she must choose between the splendid alms of a wily intriguer and the honour of the man whose name she was to bear. After a short struggle she chose the latter. But she was false,—has been false to me for years,—false in her vows to me at the last moment!" he exclaimed, in a louder tone. "Listen, and wonder at the pride and sense of honour of your sex; believe, if you can, in its modesty and morality. Ulla has dissolved her engagement to me, to betroth herself to a young cavalry officer, who knows better than I how to appreciate her rich dowry. Fräulein von Zähringen with her bounty has, as in

so much else, again triumphed over me!" Exhausted by his own vehemence, he leaned back in his chair, awaiting her reply.

His sensitive ear only perceived that Eva sprang up with something like a low cry for help that ended in a sob.

Did everything combine against her, her most sincere desires, her noblest aspirations? Would hatred only, nothing but hatred, spring up from the seeds of love sown by her? Such a result it had never entered her imagination to conceive, for her impulsive, self-denying act had been in Ulla's hands converted into a fresh blow at Waldemar's happiness.

Upon perceiving her emotion he, too, arose. He sought and found her hand, which he clasped cordially. "What, tears!" he said, gently; "no need of them for me; the time of my deepest suffering is past. I breathe once more now that it is broken,—this engagement which I have vainly tried to dissolve since I could do so with honour. It is for Ulla's sake that the manner in which it has come to an end pains me. She does not bear my name nor belong to my family, and yet in what she has done I feel again humiliated in the sight of her whom I so despise and who so persistently crosses my path. See, this is my only unhappiness in the whole affair, and the revelation of Ulla's utter unworthiness my only pain. All else is freedom,

refreshing freedom, and courage to meet the future! We were never suited to each other; we neither comprehended nor attracted each other, not even on the rare occasions when we met, and on which it was surely natural that we should exert to the utmost our amiability and power to please; we should have been wretched even in the possession of wealth and with my powers unimpaired. Now life regained lies before me,—a new life, which, in spite of my misfortune, offers me freedom of desire, of resolve, and of heart.”

What he said sounded very sincere and convincing; when Eva raised her tear-dimmed eyes to his calm face it was smiling down upon her with an expression she had never seen it wear before. Her scheme had robbed him, he said it had liberated him, and she was relieved of some little portion of the responsibility that had weighed so heavily upon her. If her bold step only conduced to the happiness of each she would willingly endure the increased dislike entertained by Waldemar for the mistress of the Zährenburg.

“Freedom of desire, of resolve, of heart!” she repeated thoughtfully, thinking the while that all this was hers also. “It sounds delightful, but it presupposes a degree of isolation. To women, who naturally have less thirst for freedom, and instead a craving for protection and for the ties of home, it cannot give perfect content. Loved ones who

exert an influence upon our desires, good friends who modify our resolves, and a heart for which we are glad to sacrifice somewhat, are, after all, the best of possessions."

"Oh, the brightest and best life of home lies before you!" he said, gently; "but Ulla has proved herself unfit for it. And, besides, Fräulein Eva, a blind man has no right to possess the heart, the affection of a woman. There is enormous selfishness in a desire for happiness so strong that to gratify it a glad young creature must be sacrificed. Therefore I always declared to Ulla that she was absolutely free, and now I turn from her only because she has abused her freedom and disgraced herself. I am not so much to be pitied as you think," he said, with a smile, after a short silence. "You are here, and you—you must not leave us, or the old hopeless lethargy which I am but just learning to overcome will take possession of me again."

For the first time she enjoyed the blissful consciousness that she must remain; that she was fulfilling her mission. Heaven had been so kind to her. Her impulsive act, over which she had just grieved so bitterly, had resulted in pure joy.

"I will stay so long as you need my aid," she said; "all that I can do for you shall be done."

The sunlight cast a halo about the pair as they clasped hands in a compact in which there was no

word of love, no vow of affection, and to which, nevertheless, the heart of each said "yes" and "amen." The swallows sailed through the air overhead, and twittered in vain, "Come too, come too." Waldemar carried Eva's hands to his lips, and said, gratefully and trustfully, "You will stay."

## CHAPTER X.

"A PRISON," sighed Frau von Zähringen, looking round her when the cottage was snowed up, and lay as if isolated from the world in the quiet garden. "A cosy little home," her son corrected her, as he listened to Eva's charming voice reading aloud to him in the evenings. "A very heaven!" the young girl thought, finding in the face which had grown so dear to her an expression of calm content that was heightened at times to absolute gayety.

Since learning from his own lips how much she was to him she had been filled with a new sense of delight that gave a fresh impetus to her thoughts and actions. For the first time in her life she felt that she was necessary to the happiness and comfort of another; for the first time she too filled a position that was hers and hers only.

No one would have remarked that her relations with Waldemar had at all changed in character, out their intellectual intercourse had become far more unrestrained since it had ceased to be his duty to remember the chain that had fettered him to so unsympathetic a creature as Ulla, and since Eva had

been convinced that what had been a self-imposed duty had become her right. Their attitude towards each other was the same, but their daily life was now so arranged by Eva as to give Waldemar the sensation of an alternation between occupation and enjoyment. She had aroused in him the desire to try his ability as an author, and she fostered his budding talent with eager interest. Not only did she write from his dictation, she also discussed with him his ideas and the shape that they took; she criticised and praised with frank candour, and the appreciation that she showed for his every thought and feeling lent an animating charm to his new occupation.

"What is to be the end of all this work," he once asked, "and who will ever read it? The autobiographies of great, and even of little, men are frequently composed for their families and friends. I ask myself in vain for whom this is written."

She laughed; the gay, childlike laugh that had only lately been heard from her.

"For a publisher, whom I shall produce. Rather consider what is to be done with the large proceeds."

Then he laughed too. "I really could not tell you just at the moment; it certainly would seem, however, that I am not quite so poor as I thought at first."

The hours spent by Eva in performing her domestic duties were mostly passed by him at the piano which she had brought to the cottage, and sometimes he surprised her with a song adapted to her voice, once even with a waltz.

"You should not do that, Waldemar," Frau von Zähringen complained. "You only irritate yourself, and me too, with those airs that contrast so terribly with our misery, and recall delightful fêtes and charming days that are fled forever. It is very unfortunate that you never can hit the golden mean with your playing. Either you improvise *larmoyante* strains which depress me to death or savage discords that excite my nerves, or you play melodies the accent and rhythm of which awaken the painfulest memories,—memories of a lost Paradise."

"It is to be hoped that you do not allude to a ball-room, mother," her son rejoined, with good-humoured sarcasm. "I assure you I never thought of that Paradise."

"Of what did you think, then, when you composed a waltz?" she asked, peevishly.

"Of Fräulein Eva," he said, simply. "I was wondering whether she had known all the joys of childhood; whether she had ever danced; and when I tried to imagine her doing so, the melody played itself."

There was in his words an evident desire to pro-



voke a reply, and Eva complied with it by saying, "I never danced but once in my life."

"But once! And did you enjoy it?" he asked, continuing with one hand the melody that "played itself," while he turned towards her.

The girl's lovely face suddenly flushed crimson, as though he were searching her very soul.

"Enjoy it!" she repeated, in a voice which she could not steady sufficiently to conceal all emotion. "Enjoyment is not exactly the word that I should use in describing my sensations on that day. It has always been a delightful memory to me, shedding its light upon my life long after the day had passed."

The melody ceased; his hand still resting on the silent keys, he asked, with interest, "Had that one day the power to cause so vivid and so lasting an impression?"

"Yes," she said, in a low tone; "then it seemed to me the realization of a fairy-tale, now I know it as a revelation of genuine kindness of heart shown in sympathy towards a child. For I was but a child then, Herr Baron; a very lonely, forgotten child, looking on from afar at the pleasures of other children of my age. I was very young when I was left an orphan, to be transferred as an object of charity from one stranger hand to another. Those who gave me protection and shelter did more than I had any right to claim, and were certainly not called

upon to bestow upon me love and enjoyment. So I grew up quite alone, without playmates, even without a dog or a kitten to love, but with my heart full of ardent, foolish desires for affection, and for the plays and pleasures of childhood.

"At last I had them. I went with my guardians to a small watering-place where there were a multitude of merry children, whom I admired at a distance, and one day I was included in a general festival for children, that took place shortly before our departure. It would be impossible to tell you of the excitement to me of the occasion, of the pride with which I was arrayed for the first and only party of my life, and of the secret and anxious dread that I felt lest the beautiful, charming children should not admit me among them."

Waldemar listened with eager interest; he had risen, and slowly approached the spot where she sat; but he uttered not a word to interrupt her narrative.

"My fears were not groundless," she continued. "I had grown up so solitary, and was a timid, awkward child, without attractiveness or charm of any kind. Instead of tasting the joys of which I had dreamed so longingly, I met with ridicule or indifference, and everything went wrong with me, to the great merriment of the little people. When I ran a race I fell down, and when I was called from my seat again——"

"You were tied fast by your long brown braids," Waldemar interrupted her, no longer able to restrain himself; "and when you were released and inspired with a little courage, you grew pretty and merry, and were at last the queen of the little festival. Was it not so?" he continued, his handsome face lighting up with interest. "Oh, I can see her still, the poor little girl who was a queen, my queen for a few hours. I was so proud to be your champion and protector. Who would have thought then that I should one day stand as helpless before you as you then stood before me?"

"You must not indulge in such sad reflections," she entreated eagerly, "or else I shall repent having recalled the memory of that little episode."

"No, no," he rejoined as eagerly; "do not do that. I like to have a remembrance in common with you, a memory that you call happy. But why have you waited so long to recall it? Did you not know that it was I who came to your rescue?"

"Oh, yes, Herr Baron, I recognized you at once, but it took some time to convince me that the thought of that little occurrence would not be distasteful to you."

"Did it take all this time?" he asked in a tone of reproach. "I believe I am a worse misanthrope than I thought. But go on, Fräulein Eva; after I declared myself your knight, were you really light-hearted and happy?"

"Happy!" she cried, with sparkling eyes. "So happy and so light-hearted! So rapt in delight and enjoyment, so tenderly inclined towards the children who received me among them! The music and the lights, the gayly-dressed crowd, the many games, with no thought of to-day or to-morrow, where all sorrow was forgotten and all disappointment,—it was intoxicating for a childish heart! Had I been a queen, an actual queen, I could not have been happier!"

"Well, and what was the end of this fairy dream, as you call it?" Frau von Zähringen interposed, being somewhat bored.

"It faded like all dreams," the young girl replied, with a slight expression of sadness. "A few days afterwards we went away, and pleasure never visited me again in a shape of such ravishing beauty. It has remained the only festival of my life, the only hour I have ever possessed of pure, unalloyed, childish enjoyment."

"You must not take so tragic a view of life, Eva," Frau von Zähringen said, reprovingly, while her son was silent. "It is the fault of so many to believe that all have the same claim to be happy. Has not Providence wisely ordained that there should be rich and poor, weak and strong? Has He not divided mankind into the high-born and the low-born? Well, then, what would you have? What is there to complain of? Your place has been

assigned you among the needy. It is sinful and useless to fix your eyes upon the goods that have been denied you."

A sudden haughty turn of the head foreboded an angry outbreak from her son, but Eva quickly forestalled it. "Indeed, I do not complain, madame; I was only gratefully recalling the gleam of sunlight on my childhood."

"That is as it should be. It is very evident that in spite of your lack of the joys of existence, of dear ones to love, and all the rest that people prate about, you never gave up, but very sensibly adopted the only calling suitable for a poor girl of your rank, the calling of a lay-sister of charity."

"My choice of a calling, madame," Eva quietly replied, "had less to do with my rank than with my inclination."

"I am sure of that," Waldemar exclaimed, as he arose; "and it is a relief to me to know it, Fräulein Eva. The only requital I can make you for the exquisite manner in which you render a service without causing any oppressive sense of obligation, is to assure you that there is no one upon earth from whom I would so readily receive such a sacrifice as from yourself."

"Yes, yes, Eva; I am perfectly satisfied with all your arrangements," said Frau von Zährenburg; "but now, I pray you, take me to my room; these childish stories have really made me quite weary."

Their mutual reminiscences of childhood, however, brought about a still greater degree of intimacy between Waldemar and Eva, a livelier interest in each other. He told her how he had hoped to find her when he visited the watering-place on two successive years after their meeting, and had forgotten his little queen only when his parents no longer resorted there in the summer. From his vivid memory of her as a child he drew a picture in his imagination of the young girl that was perhaps not very unlike the reality, completing it by questioning the original.

"Have you still the same beautiful golden-brown hair, and is there the same clear, honest look in your eyes?" he once asked.

"My hair is brown, but I really know nothing about my eyes. They should be what they then were, for I am afraid there is much of the child still left in me."

Through Doctor Jordan Eva received from Ulla a letter filled with the warmest expressions of delight and gratitude, and through him also the gift of the estate was completed. Otherwise no news of her reached Waldemar's seclusion, and Frau von Zähringen was the only one who either in blame or regret ever mentioned her name.

Thus the winter, with its long cosy evenings, passed by, to make way for spring with its buds and

blossoms, and Waldemar, if he could not feast his eyes upon its splendour, could at least be refreshed to his very soul by its breezes and fragrance. He followed Eva about the garden, as she pruned and weeded, testing with his hand the growth of the young leaves, listening to the twittering of the swallows building under the eaves of the cottage, heeding the new-born spring everywhere except in his own heart.

True, his voice often had an intense tenderness in its tones when speaking to Eva, but he set a seal upon his lips.

"A blind man has no right to fetter any fresh young creature to his crippled existence," he had been wont to declare to his mother with regard to Ulla. "Her own sense of honour held her bound, no word of mine. The more ardently I loved a woman, the less could I suffer her to sacrifice herself to me."

Thus a year had passed away since Eva's gentle ministrations first brought comfort to the cottage; and the only thing which in any degree troubled her calm content was her old friend's constantly recurring question as to how long the present condition of affairs could endure. Was she to vanish thus from the world without a trace? Ought she longer to occupy a situation which would become entirely untenable for her if Frau von Zähringen should die? and ought she to take any meas-  
res

to bring about a discovery of her real name and position?

The mere thought of such a discovery made her heart beat loud and fast. When she tried to imagine herself in such a case confronting Waldemar, she seemed to herself an unmasked traitor, who had insolently trifled with his confidence.

"I *cannot*," she answered her good old friend, when he importuned her,—"*I cannot* do it, and you must not. His contempt is so invincible, his detestation of Eva von Zähringen so intense, it would crush me. No, I will remain Eva Wilding."

And so it was. The spring was delicious, intoxicating; its songs and whisperings, to which she listened without understanding them, were so wondrous!

"This is such a little place," Waldemar sighed, sometimes, when he longed for a fuller enjoyment of nature, and was wandering restlessly about the garden bounded by its hedge of hawthorn. "I long to go far, far away! It was magnificent to look abroad over the fertile valleys from the Zähringenburg; the memories of the spring there make me restless, and I long to leave these narrow boundaries. You must not tell me that I cannot see the beauty of the landscape. I perceive it with every breath that I draw. The woodland breeze refreshes me, the sunlight warms me, and the exercise of walking does me good. Let me go out with Glen



into the meadows, where I can lie upon the grass and listen, dreaming, to the babble of the brook. The forest is so near. I remember it all from my boyhood, although I have not seen it since. My mother cannot and ought not to accompany me to teach Glen the paths I can pursue with safety; be so kind as now and then to be my patient guide, Fräulein Eva!"

How gladly she consented, and how delightful were these rare hours! Frau von Zähringen did not like to be alone, and thought herself too great an invalid to take walks; she preferred to drive in the afternoon in the landau that was now to be had in the village, and supposed that such a drive was eminently fitted to satisfy her son's desire for exercise in the open air. Now and then she was beset by a momentary fear lest Waldemar should be inspired by a deeper sentiment for Eva; lest it should be more than a sense of his helplessness, more than an intellectual pleasure in her society that led him to desire it so constantly.

"He cannot see her," the anxious mother reflected, when, against her will, she was forced to acknowledge and to admire the young girl's grace and beauty, which of late had acquired an exquisite and mysterious charm; "he cannot dream how lovely she is."

Therefore she sometimes allowed the pair, accompanied only by Glen, to take a long walk in the

forest that clasped the village in its arms, and in the luxuriant meadows beyond it that bordered the little river.

With her hand resting lightly on his arm, he walked with a firm, free tread, for she avoided every pebble in the path. The birds sang over their heads, and the tinkle of bells came faintly from the distant meadows where the cattle were grazing, and now and then there would be an hour of rest in woodland depths.

But these delightful hours were very rare. Usually Eva had some domestic duty that kept her at home, or Frau von Zähringen was too exacting in her demands upon her to allow of her devoting herself to Waldemar. At such times he would venture abroad accompanied by Glen only. At first he did not go far from the cottage, but as time went on he grew bolder and more secure, and went wherever Eva had previously been his guide.

On a certain sultry day in July Waldemar had long waited in vain for Eva beneath the linden, for Frau von Zähringen was ailing, and was full of whims and querulous complaints. He sauntered down the garden-walk and through the little gate, not intending to go far, but only a short distance along the smooth, narrow path that ran along the road here at the end of the village and then led through fields of waving grain directly into the forest. The sun was veiled in clouds, but the day

was nevertheless oppressively sultry, and there was a menacing stillness in the stifling air.

Waldemar did not, as was usual with him, leave word at the cottage that he was going to walk. He meant to go only a few steps to avoid on the straight path the incessant windings of the narrow garden-walks. The grain had grown tall; he let it slip through his fingers, and passed on through the field, when he reached it, lost in thought, following the dog, which he held in leash.

He thought of his inactive life, of its occupations so artfully contrived and yet so contracted, of the long, long days which must follow one another eternally the same! An intense longing that had grown to be pain possessed him for the light of heaven, for the beauty of the world, for freedom and independence, and mingling with these desires came thoughts of a gentle young bride with golden-brown hair and wistful childlike eyes.

It was all lost, lost to him, as she was. What! pass her life as the guide of a blind man? Nothing but a cruel selfishness could ask it of her. By his side the sunlight of her life would vanish also.

"We will hold together, old fellow, you and I," he said, half aloud, stroking the mastiff's huge head, and Glen, who understood the caress as an admonition to greater activity, quickened his pace. The blind man followed, lost in thought. He could not see the threatening clouds gathering in the skies; he

only felt the breeze blow cooler against his cheek, and was glad to breathe the freshness of the forest which he had reached.

His absence from home was not noticed there. Frau von Zähringen's head ached, and Eva was occupied in bathing it for her. The invalid had her room darkened; the young girl was ordered not to leave it for a moment, lest her services might be required there.

Meanwhile, the sultriness of the day increased. There was no sound in the hot air, not a leaf trembled on the trees, when suddenly a strong blast of wind fluttered the curtain drawn before the open window. With Frau von Zähringen's permission Eva drew it aside, and the dark and threatening skies became visible. The wind was rising every moment; it whistled in the trees and through the garden, where the bushes bent so as to lie almost prostrate beneath its force, while the clouds of dust whirled into the air were positively blinding.

The storm came rushing from the southwest, and just as Eva was closing the window the lightning flashed for the first time. She cast a hasty glance towards the seat beneath the linden,—it was vacant. Of course Waldemar had perceived the approach of the tempest much sooner there in the open air than could have been done in the house. It did not surprise her that he should have gone to his own room; he spent much of his time alone; and,

besides, Frau von Zähringen was to-day in one of her most peevish and irritable humours.

So she stood at the window watching the lightning cutting the dark clouds with zigzag streaks of liquid fire and illuminating the face of nature with an instantaneous lurid glare.

It was a remarkably severe storm. The peals of thunder shook the cottage violently, and Frau von Zähringen, becoming frightened, asked that her son might be called. The force of habit, and his mental and moral superiority, caused her still, in spite of his helplessness, to turn to him for protection, and therefore the little servant-maid, who was crouching timidly in a corner of the kitchen, was sent to his room to call him.

She returned, however, saying that he was not there. Eva hurried from the invalid's room, looked everywhere, and loudly called the dog, who knew and obeyed her voice; but there was no audible sign of life. There was no place in the house where Waldemar could have gone except to his own room; no spot in it beyond the reach of her voice. The conviction struck terror to her soul that he must have ventured abroad, and without a guide in so terrible a storm, and helpless as he was, must now be exposed to imminent danger. She ran back to Frau von Zähringen and told her of her fears, and that she was about to go in search of her son.

As she spoke, a vivid flash of lightning, followed instantaneously by a rattling peal of thunder, silenced and stunned them both for a moment, but only for a moment. Eva turned hastily to leave the room.

"No, no!" screamed the terrified old Baroness, springing up and laying hold of the girl's skirts. "You must not go! I shall die of terror! You cannot help him; he must stay where he is. I am sure he has found shelter somewhere, and fright will kill me if I am left alone!"

Another flash of lightning, that lit up the room, made her stagger back and cover her eyes with her hands, thus setting Eva free.

"I must go; I must!" the girl cried, greatly agitated. "No one can force me to stay, come what may!"

She rushed out, seized her hat in the hall, and ran along the little path and through the wheat-field, where the tall grain, beaten by the tempest of wind, was surging to and fro like waves of the sea. She ran as though her feet were winged. A peasant, with a load of hay from the harvest-field, driving as fast as his horses could go, looked after her in amazement, and called to her to warn her of danger in the forest. She did not hear him; she never paused for an instant. The foreboding cry of her own heart was louder than the thunder overhead.

The first large drops of rain came pelting down, bathing her heated cheeks and brow, and drenching her light summer dress, but she took no heed of them. Not until she neared the entrance of the forest did the violence of the storm appear to abate.

She looked about her searchingly, feeling sure of finding him whom she sought beneath some of the nearest trees.

Suddenly the prolonged howl of a dog struck upon her ear. It was repeated again and again,—a piteous sound.

"Glen!" the girl called in despair, and her heart seemed to stand still at the terrible thought that flashed upon her. "Glen! here, here!"

The dog recognized her voice as she hurried on. He appeared for a moment among the trees, only to hasten away again at sight of her.

Now she knew what had happened. Although her knees trembled beneath her, her power of thought was firm and clear. She redoubled her speed, hurrying along the forest path down which the dog had disappeared, and there—there lay Waldemar on the ground beneath a mighty oak, its topmost boughs shivered by the lightning and drooping nearly to the ground, as though bewailing the unconscious form beneath them.

All the sorrow of her life, hitherto patiently endured, found utterance in the despairing moan with which Eva sank on her knees beside him. His

eyes were closed and his face was deadly pale. She called him by every endearing word for which he had thirsted in silence; she lifted his head and sustained it against her heart, the heart that had been dearer to him than aught else in the world, and then her agony found vent in a passion of tears.

Her self-possession, of which these first moments of horror deprived her, soon returned. Her fate could not be irrevocably sealed until a physician should have pronounced her sentence.

She laid the dear head tenderly down upon the soft moss, stroked the hair from his brow, and placed her ear upon his chest. She held her breath while she listened, and then, with a cry clearer and more joyous than a lark's song, she sprang to her feet.

"Alive! alive!" she sobbed. "Oh, God, spare him! The only one, all that I have on earth. I have willingly resigned all to Thee, I ask nothing of Thy glorious universe except this one mortal life! Have mercy upon me!"

Again she raised his head and rested it in her lap, and rubbed his forehead and hands. Then suddenly bethinking herself how powerless she was thus alone, with no aid near, she wondered whether it were not best to leave him and hasten to the village for help.

Meanwhile, the brief violent shower had ceased, the soft moss upon which Waldemar lay was by no means wet through, and between the leaves over-



head "blue isles of heaven" smiled down upon the girl whose heart was filled with fervent prayer. She bent above the head pillowed on her lap, listening with intense eagerness to Waldemar's breathing as it grew more and more distinct and regular. At last—there was no longer any doubt—a thrill of life ran through his frame; he lifted his hand to his head and quietly opened his eyes.

The trembling girl waited motionless for some further sign of consciousness, for his features still wore a rapt, dreamy expression. The dream that inspired it must have been a happy one, for a smile hovered upon his lips, and a strange fire gleamed in the dark eyes, which, after gazing in bewilderment about him, rested upon the lovely face of the girl who bent above him with clasped hands.

Suddenly his own face glowed, a ray of conscious recognition informed his glance like a divine revelation, and the words "Light! light! Good God, I see! I see!" resounded like a shout of victory through the silent forest.

Was it a dream? Had some angel been sent from the skies to bestow upon her more, far more, than she had dared to ask in her utter woe? Eva did not stir; she seemed to feel that the slightest motion might destroy the hope born within her, while her pale and lovely face wore a look of reverential awe in divining such an answer to her prayers.

"I see the heavens!" Waldemar went on in a kind of ecstasy; "the sunlight, the trees, the birds fitting among them, and you, beloved, and you! Yes, it is you," he continued, taking her trembling hands in his own; "I know you by your eyes, your brow; you are Eva, my own Eva!"

He clasped her in his arms, stroking her hair, gazing into her eyes, and then when tears rose there he gently kissed them away.

A ray of broad sunshine came quivering through the trees, and lit up the glorious face of nature before Waldemar's intoxicated gaze. The birds in the boughs above his head gazed curiously down upon the happy lovers.

"Yes, I see it all," he said again, with a long-drawn breath; "the heavens, the earth, and the love in your heart. Just thus you have stood before me in my long night, and now it is broad day! But it is so quiet, so quiet, it might be a dream, and I long for the sound of a voice, for yours! Wake me, my darling, tell me it is all real; tell me, with this beautiful world about us, that you love me!"

The words he asked for had long been living in her heart, but happiness veiled her voice and lent it a tender tremor, as with his arms about her she whispered, "Yes, forever; and you alone!"

## CHAPTER XL

"**ARE** you not a thankless fellow, and outrageous'y exacting?" Doctor Jordan asked, when, three days later, he grasped Waldemar's hand, and much moved in spite of his laughing tone looked affectionately into his eyes. "Are there not grandeur and beauty enough to gaze upon and delight in, that you must embitter your unhopèd-for happiness for the sake of a girl?"

But the young man turned away in some displeasure, and paced the physician's little study to and fro with hasty strides. "Yes, it is grand; the earth and the sunlight are glorious. God alone knows how grateful I am to behold them once more. And yet I cannot but ask myself whether I have not paid too high a price for them in losing her. The sunlight fades, and the gleaming stars that I saw again, with her arm linked in mine, are no longer so divinely lovely now that I see them without her. There are times when I long for the black darkness in which I could hear her voice. Oh, doctor! it is a doubtful boon that has been bestowed upon me, and the words of gratitude die on my lips. You think only of my physical welfare, not of the mental

torture that I am enduring, or you would ask me how it happened that she could leave me, after she had been clasped in my arms, had returned my kiss, and had told me solemnly that she loved me."

The old man laid his hand soothingly upon Waldemar's arm. "Be reasonable; the infinite joy of knowing your sight restored has come to me so unexpectedly, that you must give me some time to appreciate it before I question you as to the state of your heart, which seems to me much more easy of cure than was your blindness. Go on now and tell me all; indeed, you can find no more attentive or interested listener. Go on calmly."

"Calmly!" Waldemar repeated, half indignantly. "I am hardly in a condition to understand the word! But no matter, if you will only listen. I have already told you that the day after the restoration of my sight she vanished like the phantom of a dream; here is the letter that she left for me:

"DEAREST,—Yes, dearest, now and forever, even although my lips may never again utter the word to you. Forgive me for being so weak as to show you all my heart. That short hour of intense happiness must suffice me for a lifetime! Ah, how blissful it was! how blissful! Now I know of what rapture the human heart is capable.

"But that hour is all my share of earthly happiness. I must depart, for my task is done. I am

not what you think me, dearest; I have abused your confidence, I have entered your house under a feigned name, and stolen your heart. Forgive me for my great love's sake; forgive me that even now I cannot tell you all the truth. Ah, I am weak, weak! I could not endure the pain of seeing you turn from me with contempt.

"God bless you now and forever! May He who restored sight to your eyes shed His light into your heart and make you happy.

EVA."

"Would it be natural for me to be calm?" Waldemar said, as the doctor handed him back the letter without a word; "and what can I do but come to you for an explanation of all this? It was upon your recommendation that Eva came to us; you must know who she is."

"Who she is?" rejoined the old man, with profound emotion "An angel! a spotless woman atoning for the guilt of others!"

Waldemar's face glowed with delight; he sprang up and grasped the doctor's hands with eager affection. "Thank God! Now then, old friend, help me to find her."

But the doctor gravely shook his gray head. "I cannot," he replied, in a tone that was almost sad. "I have promised upon my honour as a gentleman to keep her secret. But, come, come, Waldemar, do

not lose courage. I am not your only hope. Recall all the time you have spent with her; summon up in your mind every fact and circumstance that may enlighten you, now that you can call all your senses to your aid; investigate everything, her correspondence while she was with you, the relations she established in the village; do not think the smallest circumstance too insignificant to be of use to you."

Waldemar listened eagerly, and suddenly putting his hand into the breast-pocket of his coat, drew thence a small object carefully wrapped in tissue-paper. "I found this in her room, forgotten in the corner of a drawer," he said, unfolding a fan. "At first I thought it had been painted by herself, but when I examined it more closely—look there, doctor,—strangely enough, you will find the words, plain enough, although written in such minute characters, *fecit* Eva von Zähringen!"

He did not notice the smile that played upon his old friend's face, but went on eagerly: "If you tell me to judge from this circumstance, what can I deduce from it save that she is in some way connected with my mortal enemy? and this idea finds some confirmation in her eager justification of Fräulein von Zähringen from time to time. I remember how it always grated upon me, coming from her; and now——"

"Now the case is much worse, for this fan points to some special connection between them," the old

man replied, with a slight shade of irony in his tone. "Does the image which but a moment ago you prized beyond all the beauty of the world now lose its fascination for you, or does your love not stand the test when your sensitive egotism comes into play?"

There was some embarrassment evident in Waldemar's face. "Let us follow out our investigations," he said.

"By all means," rejoined the doctor. "Undoubtedly Fräulein von Zähringen can tell you who Eva Wilding is. You give her an admirable opening in taking her the fan. Really, it seems providential," he added, with a smile, as he examined the tiny picture. "Look, the little prince finds Cinderella by means of the slipper she has left behind her; you have but to use the fan in the same way."

"But you would not have me, the importunate beggar, seek out her who pitilessly spurned me in my misfortune?" Waldemar remonstrated, indignantly. "That path, old friend, you will tread for me."

Again Doctor Jordan shook his head. "No, my dear Waldemar, I will not. I am bound in honour to be perfectly passive in this matter. I do not even know whether this path which seems so rugged to you will conduct you to your goal; it only seems to me a very easy and natural means of inquiry; all

action in this regard must be your affair. What do you risk? You do not ask a favour, even the smallest; you merely request some information, nothing more."

"But even that is too much!" cried Waldemar; "even that. Surely, if you will not undertake the task, there must be some other means of approaching Fräulein von Zähringen."

The old man shrugged his shoulders dubiously. "Ah, you have no right to talk of the torture of uncertainty, Herr Baron! I do not know, miserable old bachelor that I am, what love is, I suppose; but even as a boy I read in my story-books that brave knights fought fearlessly with dragons and monsters of every description to gain their lady-loves, and you dread visiting a castle where lives only a young, defenceless woman! So far as I can see, there is only one monster here to be overcome, and that is your own implacable pride. If you believe that it is mightier than your love, then—why, then, by all means, stay at home."

"Nay, do not jest," Waldemar entreated, with some impatience. "I can listen to nothing save the voice of my distress. If I must go myself, I will not delay an instant longer. You are right. What can happen to me to be compared with this torture of uncertainty? To make sure of not being turned away, I will not even send in my card to Fräulein von Zähringen, but will simply have the



servant tell her that the bearer of this fan begs to see her upon business of urgent importance."

"Admirable!" exclaimed the old doctor, with an air of being a most competent judge in matters of social etiquette. "I'll have my grays brought to the door, and you can be driven three-quarters of the road to the castle; the rest of the way you must go on foot, that my vehicle may not be recognized, and tell which way the wind blows."

Ten minutes later Waldemar was seated in the doctor's light wagon, and was driving, with what sensations may well be imagined, along the road towards his old home. He had left the proud castle ill, poor, and indignant; to-day he was returning to it in search of a joy far dearer to him than any he had relinquished when he left it. As, in a dream he saw the trees and shrubbery vanish past him; he never noticed how well kept were the fields and lawns, never heard the joyous greeting of the peasants who recognized him; his eyes were fixed upon the roofs and turrets of the castle, as they stood out sharply against the clear blue sky.

On the central tower the flag was fluttering as if in gentle welcome; a golden cloud above it was vanishing into air, and below lay the winding river and the vine-wreathed cottages. How he had longed through weary days and nights to see it all once more, and yet now that it was spread out before him he could not enjoy it!

He went the last part of the way on foot, and with a beating heart entered the castle court-yard, where a servant met him.

"Is Fräulein von Zähringen at home?"

The man assented.

"Is she occupied with visitors?"

"No; Fräulein von Zähringen is quite alone at present," the servant replied.

This was a relief to Waldemar. She would certainly on that account prove more accessible to him. He handed the servant the fan, as he had planned to do, and gave him his message.

In a few minutes the man returned. Fräulein von Zähringen would see the gentleman instantly.

Mastering his agitation with some difficulty, Waldemar followed his guide. On his way hither he had carefully arranged what to say, but now he had forgotten it all.

He mounted the winding stairs and paused before the oaken door of a turret room, which the servant opened.

A mist seemed to hover before his eyes, and through it he was only conscious of a slender girl in white standing in the middle of the room beside a table, upon which she leant one hand. Her golden-brown hair was confined by a blue ribbon, and as he approached—"Eva!" he cried, almost beside himself.

The girl stretched out her hands toward him.

Strength seemed to fail her, and she sank upon her knees. "Forgive," she stammered. "It was I—I!"

"Eva!" he cried again, and, lifting her, clasped her in his arms.

Trembling, and incapable of uttering a word, she leaned upon his breast, only half conscious of his passionate kisses upon her brow, her hair, her lips, as he called her his Eva, his darling, his best beloved!

At last she recovered herself, and gently released herself. "Now you know who I am," she said, with intense emotion, "and holding me in your arms, must know also that I never could have wounded you! You—you!" she added, as happy tears rose to her eyes, "whom I loved unconsciously when I was a poor, forsaken child; you, who were the one bright memory of that time!"

He gently placed her in an arm-chair, and then knelt before her, and gazed into her beautiful brown eyes.

"Now forgive me for all the pain that I have caused you," he said, fervently. "Now teach me to comprehend the miracle of such dignity and gentleness, such strength and magnanimity in the soul of a woman; and then—then teach me to be worthy of her."

There was a long, blissful silence, before she arose, and led him to the window.

"Our home," she said, in a low voice, pointing from it,—“our lovely, happy home! It was here that my grandfather refused me a blessing, and told me I must look for it in my own breast. I have found it in my love for you!”

\* \* \* \* \*

And now a new and happy race has been founded at the Zährenburg, and the blessing of love and fidelity rests upon the house and all belonging to it.

The old Baroness lives in state in the capital, where she feels more at home than with her daughter-in-law, in whose presence, in spite of the young wife's gentleness, the lady cannot quite overcome a sense of shame.

Eva has quite outlived all the pain of her early years. “No one was ever so rich,” she says, when Waldemar clasps her in his arms. She is a happy mother, and sometimes when she tells a little brown-eyed girl at her knee the story of Cinderella, her husband says, bending above her with a kiss, “There are fairies still, little Eva!”

THE END.



the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age is expected to increase from 1.1 billion to 1.5 billion. The number of people aged 65 and over is expected to increase from 250 million to 450 million.

The world population is expected to increase from 5.5 billion in 1989 to 6.5 billion in 2000, and to 7.5 billion in 2025. The population of the world is expected to increase from 5.5 billion in 1989 to 6.5 billion in 2000, and to 7.5 billion in 2025. The population of the world is expected to increase from 5.5 billion in 1989 to 6.5 billion in 2000, and to 7.5 billion in 2025.

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1. The first part of the document is a header section containing the title and the author's name. The title is "The History of the United States" and the author is "John F. Kennedy".

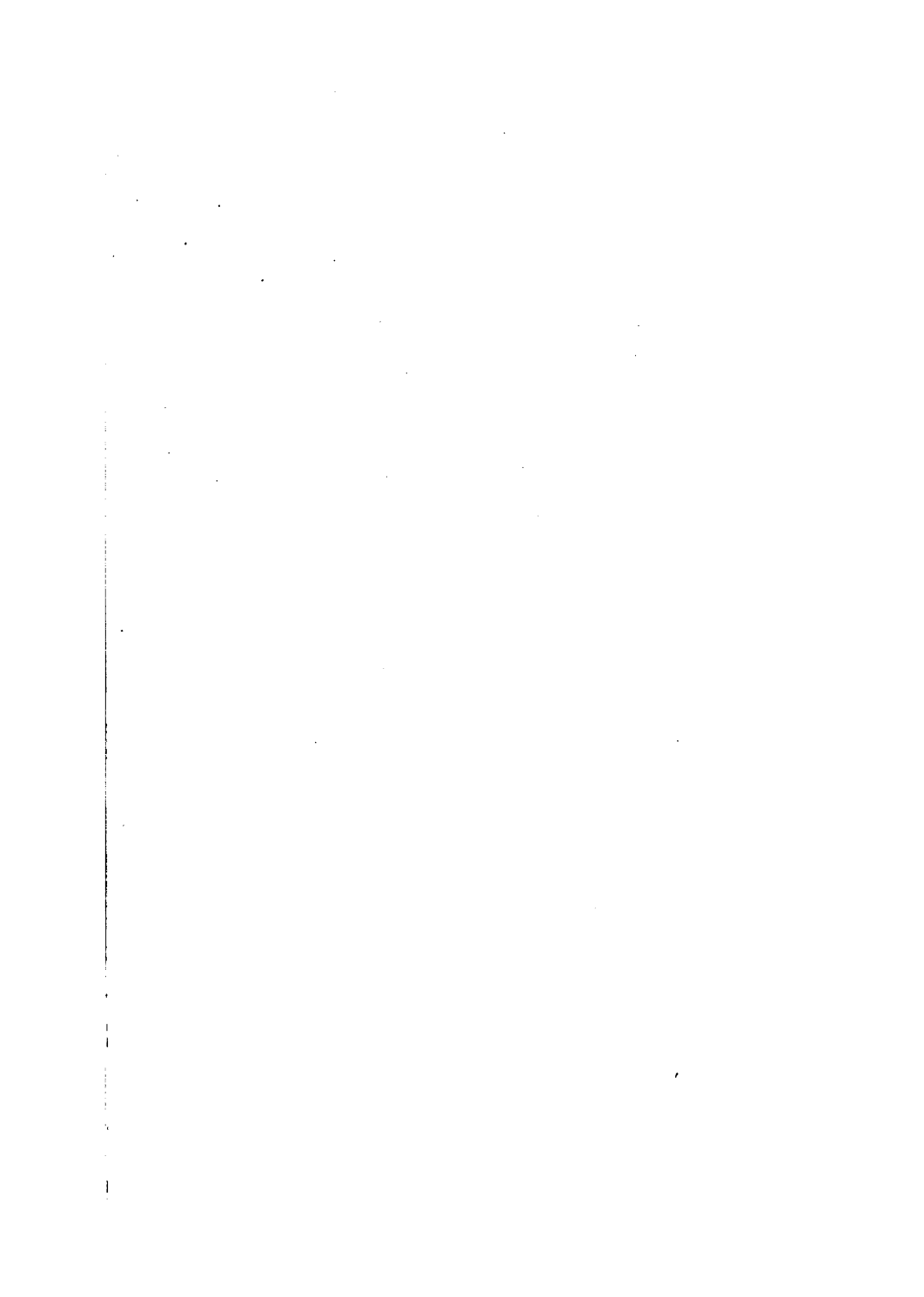
2. The second part of the document is a table of contents. It lists the chapters and their corresponding page numbers. The chapters are: "The Founding of the United States", "The Growth of the United States", "The Civil War", "The Reconstruction Era", "The Gilded Age", "The Progressive Era", "The World War Era", and "The Modern Era".

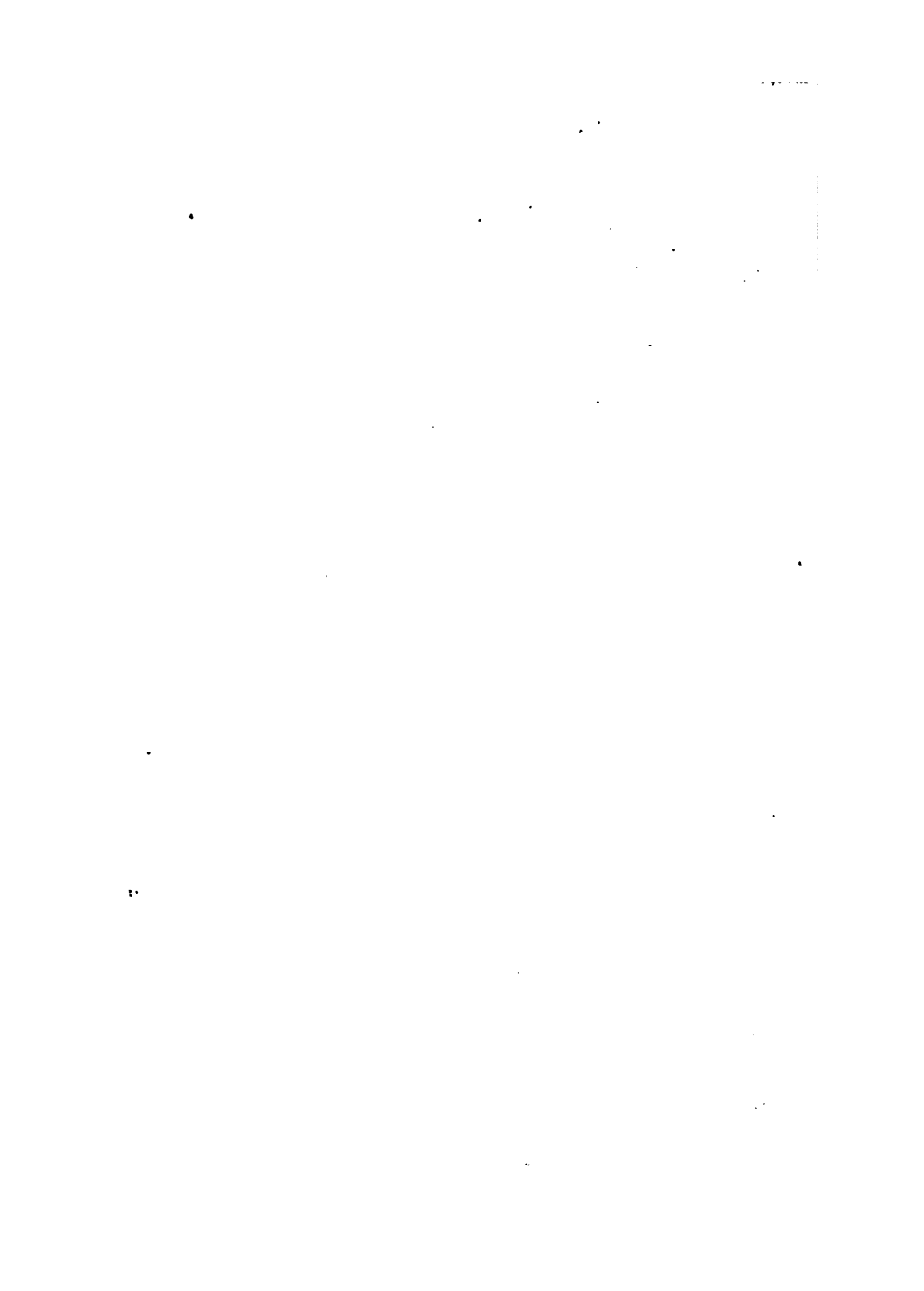
3. The third part of the document is a list of references. It includes books, articles, and other sources used in the research. The references are: "The American People" by Howard Chandler Christy, "The American Revolution" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Civil War" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Reconstruction Era" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Gilded Age" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Progressive Era" by John F. Kennedy, "The American World War Era" by John F. Kennedy, and "The American Modern Era" by John F. Kennedy.

4. The fourth part of the document is a list of footnotes. It includes additional information and references that are not included in the main text. The footnotes are: "The American People" by Howard Chandler Christy, "The American Revolution" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Civil War" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Reconstruction Era" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Gilded Age" by John F. Kennedy, "The American Progressive Era" by John F. Kennedy, "The American World War Era" by John F. Kennedy, and "The American Modern Era" by John F. Kennedy.









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